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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A SETTING FOR CHANGE:
ONE ASPECT OF THE DYNAMIC OF THEATRE FOR SOCIAL ACTION

BY ©

ELAINE M. GOTTLIEB

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL 1994

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled A SETTING FOR CHANGE: ONE ASPECT OF THE DYNAMIC OF THEATRE FOR SOCIAL ACTION submitted by ELAINE M. GOTTLIEB in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN DRAMA.

Carl Hare

Carl Hare
Supervisor

Jan Selman

Allen A. Carlson

This, the sixteenth day of May, 1994.

ABSTRACT

The author examines a particular kind of theatre for social change, which, for the purposes of discussion, she labels "Social-Action Theatre" and focusses her study on those characteristics that influence the relationships amongst and between the spectators and players and that help create a theatrical event which stimulates a shared exploration of the issues addressed in the play both on the part of the players and the spectators. She describes Social-Action Theatre as that theatre that is created with and sometimes by the members of a community to express a shared point of view about some aspect of their own experience that they want to explore for the purpose of determining how to effect change. The thesis begins with an introductory chapter in which the author investigates the literature on various kinds of theatre for social change in order to better understand the particular dynamic under consideration. The next two chapters are studies of two Social-Action Theatre projects in which the author looks at the projects in light of the characteristics identified in the first chapter and thereby adjusts her understanding of the characteristics. The author concludes that Social-Action Theatre depends for its effectiveness on a group-building and ensemble-building process that is directly linked to the subject matter of the play (usually a collective creation

process); on playing to an audience that constitutes a community; on the spectators having had first-hand experiences related to the issues explored by the theatre company and reflected in the play; and, because the processes set in motion by the link between spectators and players through the play and event and through contacts outside of the event are so central, on Social-Action Theatre practitioners being aware of and being able, where practical, to manipulate the various factors which affect these processes.

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank the faculty, artists, and community members who helped make this thesis possible. Without my supervisor Carl Hare, who for the past four years has inspired me with his breadth and depth of knowledge and his conscientiousness, I would not have accomplished the very difficult task of beginning to write about a kind of theatre that has received little scholarly attention. I would like to thank Jan Selman, whose course in popular theatre helped to give me a vision of what popular theatre can be, for believing in and encouraging me. I would like to thank Allen Carlson for helping me to ask the right questions and David Barnet for chairing my oral examination. I am grateful to Joe Cloutier and Alexina Dalgetty and Deborah Hurford-Simcoe for allowing me to study their theatre projects and taking the time to talk to me; and to all of the representatives of the organisations who sponsored the performances of the plays for the help and information they gave me. Finally, I would like to thank my husband Terry for the priceless gift of a graduate education, for his love and support, and for making it possible for me to get a little closer to fulfilling my potential.

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Chapter One:

Identifying An Aspect of the Dynamic of Social-Action Theatre

Introduction

This thesis concerns a type of theatre which has no universal term to describe it but which falls within, or at least intersects with, the domain of several kinds of theatre that have been named, and in some cases, defined. All of these kinds of theatre have in common that they are theatre for social change. Within this very broad category of "theatre for social change" I will not attempt to define a particular kind of theatre or even choose from among the definitions that have been developed.[1] However,

---

[1] Eugene Van Erven defines "popular theatre" or "radical people's theatre" as that theatre "that tries to attract traditionally nontheatregoing audiences of laborers, peasants, and white collar workers." Later in the book he adds to the definition: "['popular theatre'] sees the theatre as a place where the oppressed classes in society are made conscious of the injustice of their predicament. As such, it could be seen as a theatre of class struggle that uses cultural means to prepare the upset of the bourgeois hegemony" (Van Erven 5, 13-14; see footnote five for full reference). Baz Kershaw's description of what he calls "community-oriented" theatre as practised in Britain mostly in the rural areas stresses that it is theatre created for and with a particular community, which combines "entertainment" with "debate, discussion, socio-political proposals and recommendations." It is a "theatre of social engagement . . . primarily committed to bringing about actual change in specific communities" (Kershaw 5; see footnote four for full reference). Salihu Bappa and Michael Etherton, both practitioners in the third world, define "popular theatre" as a "direct and continuing involvement with . . . peasants and proletarians" and a precise exploration of their experiences through the medium of traditional storytelling (Bappa and Etherton 126; see footnote twenty

I will describe that kind of theatre which I have chosen as my focus: a theatre that is created with, and sometimes by, the members of a community to express a shared point of view about some aspect of their own experience that they want to explore for the purpose of determining how to effect change. Furthermore, I will focus on the aspect of the dynamic of this kind of theatre that seems to lay the foundation for change by stimulating a shared exploration of the issues that the play addresses. Given this description and focus, for the purposes of discussion and ease of reference I will refer to this kind of theatre simply as "Social-Action Theatre" because I am limiting my discussion of social-action theatre to this one kind.

In this chapter I will be limiting my inquiry to books and articles which either theorise about various kinds of social-action theatre or study them historically as movements, and within this category I look only at material that illuminates the particular dynamic of the kind of theatre I am describing. I have not included studies that limit themselves simply to describing particular projects or companies. Also I have not

---

for full reference). Ross Kidd, another third-world practitioner, points out that popular theatre "builds on a long history of people's songs, drama, dance, drumming, and puppetry being used in resistance against colonial and other forms of oppression. . . " (Kidd, "People's Theatre, Conscientisation, and Struggle," 10; see footnote twenty-one for full reference).

included books and articles on feminist theatre, gay theatre, Black theatre, or Chicano theatre because they describe either theatre that is traditional except for the fact that it is written by playwrights who are from these marginalised groups; or they describe collectively created political theatre that, because it brings a finished analysis to its audiences, does not fall within the focus of this thesis. Although these kinds of theatre do lead to social change, they are not Social-Action Theatre. Of the books that I survey in this chapter about theatre for social change in developed countries, only one deals exclusively with what could be described as Social-Action Theatre. Alan Filewod's book, Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada, is not about Social-Action Theatre but about documentary theatre, a form that is often used by Social-Action Theatre.[2] He thus includes chapters about plays such as The Farm Show and Paper Wheat, which because they tend to reinforce the traditional ideologies of their audiences, are not Social-Action Theatre.[3] Nevertheless, I have included some examples from these chapters because Social-Action Theatre often uses the documentary style, and as a result some of the issues are the same.

---

[2] Alan Filewod, Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada [hereafter cited as CE] (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987).

[3] The Farm Show was created in Ontario in 1972 by Theatre *Passe Muraille* under the direction of Paul Thompson. The actors who created the play were Anne Anglin, Fina MacDonell, Janet Amos, Miles Potter, David Fox, and Alan Jones. It is a documentary play about a farming community in Clinton, Ontario that was researched in the community with the people that lived there and then performed for them in a local barn. The play was then taken on tour to Toronto, Ottawa, and various Saskatchewan

Baz Kershaw's book, The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention, discusses no examples of Social-Action Theatre, but in theorising about the mechanism by which radical, alternative, "community-oriented" theatre in Britain has the potential to produce real social change, he discusses most of the issues relevant to my own discussion of Social-Action Theatre.[4] Eugene Van Erven's book, Radical People's Theatre, is about radical political theatre in general and includes some insights that apply to Social-Action Theatre.[5] Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and the articles by Ross Kidd, Salihu Bappa, and Michael Etherton about "popular theatre" describe kinds of theatre that fall within my description of Social-Action Theatre; consequently, their insights are directly relevant to my thesis.

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communities (Filewod, CE 24, 35; Usmiani 48; see footnote eighteen for full reference). Paper Wheat was created in 1977 by 25th Street Theatre in two versions. The first was directed by Andras Tahn and created by Linda Griffiths, Catherine Jaxon, Brenda Leadley, Sharon Bakker, Bob Bainborough, and Michael Fahey. The second was rewritten and directed by Guy Sprung with Bakker and Fahey and Skai Leja, David Francis, and Lubomir Mykytiuk (Filewod, CE 90, 99).

[4] Baz Kershaw, The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention (London: Routledge, 1992).

[5] Eugene Van Erven, Radical People's Theatre (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989).

Social-Action Theatre can take many forms. Sometimes it is created by the members of the community it is meant to serve, either by a small group who happen to be actors, or a group that is trained as actors for the project, or (as in participatory theatre) a large number of the community. The theatre is created either with or without outside help from theatre artists, development workers, educators, and/or counselors. Sometimes it is created by these outsiders in consultation with the community or with professionals who serve the community. Sometimes the main focus of the work is not performance and the benefits a play can bring to an audience but simply working with a group using theatrical exercises as a way of helping them to analyse their own problems and situation (without ever creating a play to be performed for others).

In general, there are three different kinds of Social-Action Theatre:

1. theatre that is created by the members of the community;
2. theatre created by outsiders in consultation with the community; and
3. participatory theatre, in which an initial scenario is created either by outsiders or insiders and then altered by the audience during the performance.

During the 1970's and 1980's in Africa, Latin America, India, and Canada, this kind of theatre was developed under varying conditions and levels of political and economic oppression and continues in some form today.[5] During the seventies and eighties, hundreds of social action group (SAG) movements formed all over India. Many of these use theatre to fight for the lower classes, but only a minority use methods that allow for the input of the people themselves. However, some do use more participational methods. One example of such a project was organised by SAG, Action for Culture and Political Change (ACPC), formed by six *harijan* (lower or untouchable caste) school graduates in the southern Tamilnadu region of India in 1974. ACPC would only go into a community when they had been invited by fellow *harijan* villagers and then would live in the community for awhile before beginning the project. Each project had three stages. The first stage involved Freireian literacy work that used role playing to help the *harijan* villagers to attain a better understanding of the relationship between landowners and *harijans*. In one case described by Ross Kidd, "the ACPC began in a district where the Hindu-culture landowners, who were 5% of the population, had tracts of 6-8,000 acres each, and the *harijans*, who formed 80% of the population, lived in total economic, cultural and political subjection." The second stage of the work involved more intensive training of a leadership team for the village, in which role playing and drama were used to help develop skills and plans for action. In the third stage, the villagers would create a performance to express a sense of pride in their newfound hopes for liberation and sense of positive identity.[7]

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[5] This section is not meant to be a comprehensive survey, but is simply meant to give the reader some idea of the forms that this kind of theatre has taken in some of the major centres.

In Africa, two of the major leaders of the "popular-theatre" movement were Ross Kidd and Martin Byram, who were hired to assist in the rural development program in northern Botswana in 1974. They helped found *Laedza Batanani*, an annual festival in which community leaders and extension workers organised the festival and chose the issues. Then a smaller group including performers who lived in the area would create a play to be toured though the five local villages in the area.[8] Kidd was also involved in a project in Zimbabwe with two communities in which participatory theatre was used to explore solutions to the communities' local issues.[9] Michael Etherton, founder of the Chikwakwa Theatre in Zambia at the University of Zambia, led a project in which university drama students created plays about local issues and toured the rural areas. During Etherton's time there, rather than just having the students tour, the program tried to incorporate more participation with the community. First, local workshops were added to teach theatre skills to the villagers, and then the group tried to work closely with the local development projects in the areas where they toured. They also added discussion sessions after the performances. In 1977, Etherton moved to Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria to work on a "popular-theatre" project focussed on the national food production campaign, "Operation Feed the Nation". For this project, the plays were developed only after consulting the local farmers to get a clearer understanding of the issues from their perspective. In Kenya in the same year, playwright Ngugi wa Thiong'o worked with the popular education worker, Ngugi wa Mirii, to write a play for the entire village near Nairobi. "For several months public rehearsals were held in which the whole community participated (there were over 150 parts), working out the songs and dances, improving the performance through collective criticism, and discussing the meaning of the play for their own lives. . . . The play was staged every

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[7] "India: People's Theatre in a Performative Culture of 3,000 Years," rev. of Traditional Forms of Communication and the Mass Media in India by Madhu Malik, Bengali Theatre by Kironmoy Raha, and "Domestication Theatre and Conscientization Drama in India" in Tradition for Development: Indigenous Structures and Folk Media in Non-Formal Education by Ross Kidd and Nat Coletta, Communication Research Trends 9.1-2 (1988): 9.

[8] "Sub-Saharan Africa: Popular, Political and People's Theatre," rev. of The Development of African Drama by Michael Etherton and Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book by Yemi Ogunbiyi, Communication Research Trends 9.1-2 (1988): 15; and Ross Kidd, "Liberation or domestication: Popular theatre and non-formal education in Africa," Educational Broadcasting International 12.1 (1979): 6.

[9] Ross Kidd, From People's Theatre for Revolution to Popular Theatre for Reconstruction: Diary of a Zimbabwean

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Workshop (The Hague: CESO, 1984).

weekend for two months and attracted over 30,000 people from all over Kenya." The play was a protest against impoverishment and political repression; and eventually Ngugi wa Thiong'o was arrested and jailed without a trial, and Ngugi wa Mirii barely escaped into exile.[10]

In Latin America, "popular theatre" was developed under similarly repressive political regimes. For example, in Chile in the late 1970's a play was developed among ordinary working women who, in order "to make a little money, met to make little tapestries called *arpillas* out of cast-off clothing." The play called *La Arpillera* served as a model for the expansion of "popular theatre" in Chile in the 1980s. During that time, both under Pinochet and after the return to democracy, "a great variety of independent centres for popular education began to encourage theatre as a dramatic form of conscientisation, community entertainment and neighbourhood organisation. . . . It was at this point that some centres of popular art, such as CENECA in Santiago, began to introduce the ideas of Augusto Boal and others experimenting with new forms of people's theatre in Latin America."[11]

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[10] Kidd, "Liberation or domestication" 7-9; and "Sub-Saharan Africa: Popular, Political and People's Theatre" 16.

[11] "People's Theatre in Latin America," rev. of *Practica teatral y expresion popular en America Latina* by Carlos Ochsenious et al. and *El teatro en la comunidad* by Roberto Vega, *Communication Research Trends* 9.1 and 2 (1988): 19-20.

Boal began his career as founder and director of the experimental nationalist Arena Theatre in Sao Paolo, Brazil. After the military coup in 1964 Boal had to deal with increasing censorship, and in 1971 he was imprisoned and tortured and driven into exile. During his period of exile, he worked with popular education programs in Peru and developed his ideas on what he calls the "Theatre of the Oppressed". His ideas are derived from Paulo Freire's ideas about popular education.[12] Boal advocates a theatre in which "the spectator delegates no power to the character (or actor) either to think or act in his place: on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonic role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change--in short trains himself for real action."[13] Alan Filewod explains Boal's Forum Theatre:

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[12] Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* influenced both Augusto Boal's and Catalyst Theatre's work. "Freire advances a concept of adult education predicated on a Marxist analysis of the process of social change, which posits that an oppressed class is denied the ability to determine the conditions of its existence. Freire calls for a 'problem-posing education consisting of acts of cognition. . . . This education is a process of 'decoding' reality; the educator entering a community must decode what he discovers, codify it again (in a photograph, a play, or a drawing), and use this as a catalyst for discussion. For Freire, true education is a process of political analysis; his work in the slum barrios of Brazil led him to the conclusion that education is of value only if it leads to material change" (Filewod, *CE* 156). His "radical theories of adult education provide the theoretical justification for audience intervention in the performance as a means of social analysis" (Filewod, *CE* 153). Freire's ideas have also influenced the two other kinds of theatre described in this chapter, which essentially use theatre as a way of stimulating a shared exploration of the issues addressed in the play without having the spectators actually intervene in the play. However, my description in this thesis of the dynamic of Social-Action Theatre is not based on his ideas of "codification" and "de-codification".

> Boal's Forum Theatre has developed into a strict formula. The actors create a scenario in consultation with the target audience; the play is performed once in its entirety and then repeated. The scene is organized around [a] single example of oppression leading to a contradiction which defeats the oppressed character. The Joker explains the rules to the audience. A participant may replace the oppressed character at any point in the action when the scene is repeated. If that person suggests an unrealistic solution, the audience is asked to stop the action by calling 'magic!.' [sic] This leads to a discussion, and eventually the audience will discover a solution to the dramatic problem.

Boal's Forum Theatre has been adapted and used internationally, including French and English Canada, by theatre groups such as Outouais Theatre of Ottawa, Headlines Theatre of Vancouver, and Theatre Sans Detour of Quebec.[14]

During the late seventies and early eighties, an English Canadian theatre company in Edmonton, Catalyst Theatre Society, founded in 1977 by David Barnet, who appointed Jan Selman as the first full-time Artistic Director in 1979, developed another kind of participatory theatre. The 1981 play Stand Up for Your Rights, which helped its mentally handicapped audiences explore solutions to problems involving their legal rights such as confronting discrimination in hiring, introduced a technique very similar to Boal's in which the audience is invited to come up on stage and change the action.[15] It's About Time, created and performed in prisons and half-way houses in Alberta between the summer of 1982 and February 1983, used a different method, which Selman calls "animation".[16] It used no referee or joker, and rather than coming up on stage the audience was simply asked for verbal input by the actors. At a crucial decision point an actor would turn to the audience in character and ask for help and advice.[17]

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[13] Augusto Boal, Theater of the Oppressed, trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride (New York: Urizen, 1979) 122.

[14] Filewod, CE 158-9; "People's Theatre in Latin America" 18; and David Joseph Burgess, "The Talent for Living Project: A Reflective Narrative of a Popular Theatre Project with Senior Citizens," master's thesis, U of Alberta, 1991, 31-3.

In Quebec the alternative or *Jeune Theatre* movement of the seventies produced several groups that practised Social-Action Theatre. One of these, *Le Theatre de Quartier*, founded in 1975, "settled in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and Saint-Louis sections of Montreal, and started to perform carefully researched productions based on specific problems of the people in the area. . . . Once a theme was explored by the actors, they encouraged the audience to join in and give their own version."[18] Other Quebecois groups that practised Social-Action Theatre included *Le Theatre Sans Detour*, already mentioned, *Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire*, and *Theatre Parminou*.[19]

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[15] Filewod, CE 157. Stand Up for Your Rights directed by Anthony Hall "was performed in three versions: the initial production from January to May 1981; a remount the following year; and a television adaptation broadcast on the CBC on 11 November 1981." For an opinion on how Catalyst's method in Stand Up for Your Rights differed from Boal's method, see pages 69-70.

[16] The actor/creators were Jane Heather, Ed Lyszkiewicz, and Robert Winslow.

[17] Filewod, CE 152, 168, 171-3.

In this thesis I will examine certain characteristics of Social-Action Theatre which together create one essential aspect of its dynamic and which seem to lay the foundation for a shared exploration of the issues addressed in the play, both by the players and the community. *This aspect of the dynamic consists in the theatre event pointing to real community ties and concerns, building on and strengthening these, but not at the expense of an awareness of individuality. In Social-Action Theatre, a community arrives together at an interpretation of reality with regard to a particular issue or concern.* In general, the characteristics that create this aspect of the dynamic are the following: (1) the players are aware of each other as individuals and are close-knit as a group--they are aware of individual stories and how they are linked; (2) both players and audience are alert to each other as people rather than just as people in their role as entertainers and spectators; (3) the members of the audience are aware of their communal ties; (4) all are aware of the issues raised by the play as directly relevant to their lives together as a community; and (5) the play and event are structured to create an atmosphere characterised by informality and directness in which the spectators can be equal and active participants in engaging with the issues.

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[18] Renate Usmiani, Second Stage: The Alternative Theatre Movement in Canada (Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1983) 118.

[19] Usmiani 118, 123-4.

An Investigation of the Literature with Regard to the Dynamic Under Consideration

Theatre as a Force for Change

Because the focus of this thesis is the particular aspect of the dynamic of Social-Action Theatre which generates a shared exploration of the issues addressed in the play and, by so doing, might be described as laying the foundation for change, I will begin by surveying various theorists' and practitioners' opinions on how theatre can become a force for change. The most straightforward answer to this question is provided by the third-world "popular-theatre" practitioners, who stress that the theatre, through the process of providing a forum for dialogue and analysis, can create the impetus among a group to organise for change.[23]

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[23] Ross Kidd, "Popular Theatre, Conscientization, and Popular Organization," Courier 33, (19-): 18-29; Kidd,

But the third-world practitioners stress that action for change will not happen spontaneously. Rather, it is always necessary to follow up the performance with continued dialogue, workshops, research, and organisation. For example, Ross Kidd writes, "On its own, people's theatre will never be anything more than an interesting and exciting spectacle, a chance to let out grievances and frustrations. It will work as a medium for social transformation only when it is woven into an on-going process of critical analysis, organisation, and struggle."[21] Bappa and Etherton describe one Nigerian workshop, which, despite the fact that it succeeded in stimulating participation and dialogue and a new determination among its farmer audience to try to work together for change, they considered a failure. They considered it a failure because they "were not in a position organisationally to carry this collective consciousness further."[22] Groups in Canada and Britain, such as The Mummers of Newfoundland, which was founded by Chris Brookes, Lynn Lunde, and John Doyle in 1972 and the Scottish 7:84, which was founded by the British playwright John McGrath in 1973, have also developed an awareness

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"Popular Theatre and Political Action in Canada," (unpublished), Printed by Participatory Research Group, Toronto, 8p.p.; Salihu Bappa and Michael Etherton, "Popular Theatre Voice of the Oppressed," Commonwealth 25.4 (1983): 126-30.

[21] Ross Kidd, "People's Theatre, Conscientisation, and Struggle," Media Development 27.3 (1980): 14.

[22] Bappa and Etherton 126.

that theatre by itself cannot be the cause of change but must rely on other organisations to step in afterwards to organise for action.[23]

Another viewpoint says that theatre makes change by changing and strengthening culture, and by so doing lays the foundation for revolution. The third-world "popular-theatre" theorists and practitioners see changing and strengthening culture as part of the process, but their stress is on using the theatre event as the actual arena for action. For example, Augusto Boal refers to a new working-class culture, tracing the historical progression of the theatre from Aristotelean to Brechtian to the Theatre of the Oppressed; but the chief aspect of the aesthetic of this theatre refers directly to its actual, practical dynamic, a dynamic in which the spectator becomes the protagonist, testing out ideas, rehearsing for the revolution. The Theatre of the Oppressed evokes in the spectator "a desire to practise in reality the act he has rehearsed in the theater. The practice of these theatrical forms creates a sort of uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks fulfillment through real action."[24]

According to Bappa and Etherton,

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[23] Filewod 113, 120, 122, 150; Kershaw 148, 165 [Citing John McGrath, The Cheviot (London: Methuen, 1981) xxvii.]; Van Erven 188-9.

[24] Boal 122, 141-2.

> Popular theatre audiences must be involved in the actual processes of performance; and by restoring the confidence of the peasants and workers in their own cultural representations, to extend their confidence into the political and economic spheres. . . . 'Theatre' in this context becomes nothing less than the actual social process whereby the people come to make their own political and economic analysis for future action [emphasis added].[25]

According to Bappa and Etherton, theatre makes change in two ways: (1) by serving as the actual arena for discussion and decision making and (2) by helping to revive the people's confidence in their own cultural forms and creative potential. Restoring confidence in the area of culture also helps restore confidence in the people's ability to participate fully in political and economic spheres, especially because they are using cultural expression to analyse and make decisions about their own concerns. Kidd attributes to Freire the notion that the kind of educational experience that "popular theatre" provides is equivalent to "cultural action".[26] In developing a "revolutionary consciousness" the spectators become aware that people create culture and so can transform the world.[27]

Kershaw's thesis about the way alternative "community-oriented theatre" has a potential to change the world also involves the notion of culture. But in his understanding, theatre works on people's ideology to effect a gradual change in culture rather than trying to directly affect their actions. According to Kershaw, this more subtle approach does not lead directly to action but to a change in the culture of a community that is affected by a play:

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[25] Bappa and Etherton 127.

[26] Kidd, "Popular Theatre, Conscientisation, and Popular Organisation" 24.

[27] Kidd, "People's Theatre, Conscientisation, and Struggle" 10.

> if the spectator decides that the performance is of central significance to her or his ideology then such choice implies a commitment . . . a decision that affects a system of belief, an ideology, is more likely to result in changes to future action. . . . [I]f a whole audience, or even a whole community, responds in this way to the symbolism of a 'possible world', then the potential performance efficacy is multiplied by more than the audience number. To the extent that the audience is part of a community, then the networks of the community will change, however infinitesimally, in response to changes in the audience members. Thus the ideology of communities, and so their place in culture, may begin to have a bearing on the wider socio-political make-up of a nation or even a continent.[25]

Kershaw's cautious claims contrast distinctly with those of the bolder third-world theorists and practitioners. His main thesis is that what he calls "community-oriented" alternative theatre has the potential for promoting change, not by trying to directly affect the spectator's actions but by seeking as a movement to change the structure of the audience's community and culture, by introducing a subversive element based on the ideology of the series of counter-cultures that developed during and after the 1960's.

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[25] Kershaw 29.

He argues that, given that the British alternative companies were committed to the ideology of the counter-cultures, they may as a whole have affected their audiences in a systematic way. According to Kershaw, one index of the British Alternative Theatre Movements' commitment to the ideology of the counter-culture was its collective approach. He implies that the counter-culture did have sufficient cohesion as an ideology to systematically influence alternative theatre audiences, and points out that Theodore Roszak "identifies the ideological foundation of the counter-culture as an opposition to hegemony by a utopianist idealism which promoted an egalitarian ethic through the advocacy of participative democracy on a localised level (Roszak 1969: 200)."[29]

Kershaw also points to the practitioner John McGrath, who explicitly stated that he saw the counter-culture of the 1960's as the impetus for the Alternative Theatre Movement. McGrath's understanding of how the theatre works for a cultural revolution is coloured by his Marxist beliefs. He looks for "the creation of a counter culture based on the working class, which will grow in richness and confidence until it eventually displaces the dominant bourgeois culture of late capitalism (McGrath 1979: 44)."

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[29] Kershaw 16-39, 102.

According to Kershaw's interpretation, McGrath sees the function of theatre not as providing neat political messages, but to change the culture through the practice of theatre. "[A] political method of looking at the world is what I'm interested in rather than direct political message conclusions (McGrath 1985: 396)." Kershaw interprets this statement and sums it up: "[I]deological progress evolves from the interaction of practice and theory."[30] Kershaw uses McGrath's statement to back up his claim that the potential social efficacy of theatre is not a result of stirring the masses to action but of effecting very minute changes in the culture of each community of which an audience is a part.[31] Kershaw outlines a very elaborate theory of how this change can happen by provoking an ideological crisis in the audience.[32]

However, the examples he gives to illustrate the theory are very problematic; and the one example of this kind of theatre which he cites as having had an actual effect on the actions taken by its targeted audiences, John McGrath's company 7:84's The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil, which toured throughout the Scottish Highlands to fifty-three venues in 1973, and which dealt with the controversy triggered by the discovery and development of the North Sea Oil Fields, seemed to work neither by changing the culture of its audience nor by provoking an ideological crisis but just by the very method Kershaw discounts, of stirring up the masses.[33] The political climate seems to have been ripe for the political message of the show, which was that Scottish resources had been exploited too long by foreigners and that now that Scottish oil had been discovered, it should benefit Scotland and not foreign oil companies.[34]

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[30] Kershaw 148-50.

[31] This theory does not necessarily agree with McGrath's message, which may be simply that a fixed revolutionary message brought to the masses will not work; instead, theatre workers must analyse the situation of individual communities and apply the theory to the actual situations. McGrath, unlike Kershaw, may actually believe in "stirring up the masses" by developing a revolutionary consciousness.

[32] See pages 47-51 for an explanation of how this works.

In a similar vein, Filewod reports that Chris Brookes of The Mummers believes that to provoke its audiences to action, theatre must "find a language not just of issues and ideology, but of ritual and ceremony rooted in a sense of collective belief beyond language." Theatre must provide the spectators not just with statements of ideology but with images that will stay with them.[35]

Third-world practitioners stress the importance of theatre that depicts situations in such a way that the spectators will see that change is possible. This idea comes from the theories of Brecht. Kidd explains that because it portrays conflict, the theatre is

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[33] Kershaw 155

[34] Kershaw 119.

[35] Kershaw 2-4; Filewod 114, 119.

> particularly useful for expressing the reality of class conflict, for reflecting the class relationships which influence social situations. This opens up the possibility of making a structural analysis of society, demystifying the notion of social change as a neutral technical process.[36]

The Play as an Expression of the Players and the Community

Another aspect basic to a description of Social-Action Theatre is the extent to which it claims to be an expression of its audience. The community that Social-Action Theatre is created for and with can be defined in different ways: it may be a genuine community, in the sense that everyone lives in one place and/or shares some of the same history and traditions; it may be a group whose members have created ties with each other because of a shared concern or shared activities; or it may be a group whose members share a common culture because they either live, work, or go to school at a particular institution.

When Social-Action Theatre is created with and for one of these kinds of communities, then the ideal is for the play to be an expression of that particular community.

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[36] Kidd, "People's Theatre, Conscientisation, and Struggle" 10.

The facilitators and players share creative control with their audience, whose experiences are reflected in the play. But in most cases, especially in developed countries, the relationship between the players and the community is more complex. The theatre is created with representatives of a community that is more broadly defined and which, in reality, encompasses other communities or individuals with few community ties. It is created with this broadly-defined community in mind; but the audiences for the play will all be very different, perhaps only sharing experiences with respect to the issue that the play addresses, especially when the play deals with social issues and problems such as racism, alcoholism, and family violence. In this case, the play may not be an expression of its audience. The play is an expression of those who created it (either an expression of the creators' first-hand experiences or of experiences they have researched), an expression of a point of view that the audience adds to or responds to but does not overrule.

In addition, even when the play is an expression of the community it was created with and for, there may be differences in point of view within the community; or the point of view of the community may be undeveloped. Ideally, the theatre stimulates dialogue and the honest and varied responses of the community they are playing to, helping the community to develop a shared point of view, not only during the performance event itself but also during the playbuilding and research process.

Community's Participation in the Creation of the Play

Depending on the methods of the theatre group, the community members take part at varying levels, from creating the play themselves, to participating in the play, to being interpreted by the actors after a participatory or traditional research process. Two kinds of theatre which may involve research with the community but which are not Social-Action Theatre are agitprop and purely didactic or educational theatre. In both, a finished analysis and point of view are presented most typically by outsiders to the community with the object of persuading the audience either to accept a particular political view in the case of agitprop or to adopt new knowledge or skills in the case of didactic theatre. The message of such theatre is heavily shaped by expert opinion or by a set dogmatic theory or ideology.[37] Even when it is created by or with insiders, it is not the kind of theatre I am describing because it begins with a set way of interpreting the issues that it addresses rather than leaving room for the players and community to arrive together at an interpretation of the situation with regard to an issue or concern.

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[37] Kidd, "Popular Theatre, Conscientization, and Popular Organization" 18-19, 23.

However, a variety of forms that involve a wide range of degrees of participation of the community do fall within the kind of theatre being described here. These include projects that use a wide range of methods to understand the community from an insider's point of view. This point of view tends not only to be reflected in the point of view of the play itself, but also can be reflected in the approach taken to solving the community's problems. If the point of the view of the play is that of an insider, then it helps ensure that the approach to the problem will reflect the community's emerging understanding of its own situation and interests rather than that of outsiders who may not have as thorough an understanding of the community.[38]

Some Social-Action Theatre groups, by focussing their research on the community and its point of view, go one step beyond those who do research-based educational or agitprop plays and thus are included in the kind of theatre being described here. I am not referring to a black-and-white distinction but to a difference in orientation. For example, for the second project described in this thesis, Azimuth Theatre's Under Broken Wings, the company researched the play in such a way that it was possible to attain an understanding of the point of view of those directly affected by family violence even though, for the most part, they did not directly consult those with first-hand experiences. Instead, they spoke to professionals who served the community. This approach allowed for a greater openness to, understanding of, and possible identification with, the community's point of view than would, for example, simply reading general books or articles on the subject of family violence. In this case, the professionals spoke for their clients, telling anecdotes and trying to convey to the researchers the clients' point of view and experiences.[39] Another example is the Globe Theatre's 1978 play, No. 1 Hard, about the history and current problems of the Saskatchewan grain industry, for which the company engaged in traditional research but nevertheless conveyed an openness to the input and point of view of the community during and after the performance. "At the end of each performance the audience were invited not only to discuss the issues but also to criticise the play and suggest ways of improving it."[40]

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[38] Kidd, "Popular Theatre, Conscientization, and Popular Organization" 18-20; 23-4. Kidd argues exclusively for theatre that is done by the community members themselves. I argue that other levels of participation of the community can also help produce an insider's point of view. See pages 39-40.

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[39] Of course researching the play with professionals who serve a community will not necessarily result in an insider's point of view. It may depend on the extent to which these professionals are insiders to the community.

[40] Kidd, "Popular Theatre and Political Action in Canada" 5. See also page 55 for comments about the

A method of research that allows for a much greater level of participation by the community concerned with the issues is participatory research. With this method, those creating the play may live amongst the community for awhile if it is a community of place and may either interview people in the community (using either formal or informal methods) and/or actually involve them in improvising scenes for the play. For example, for the Catalyst Theatre production It's About Time,

> the research process began with workshops with paroled residents of half-way houses, and continued with four sessions at Drumheller [federal prison]. These visits consisted of conversations with inmate volunteers; in their final visit the actors played some rough scenes, stopping frequently to ask the inmates to criticise and comment. . . . In all of the workshops the inmates and parolees were asked to step into the scenes and improvise.[41]

This practice of having the community members themselves explore the issues through drama is sometimes used only during the research phase, after which the outsiders perform the play. But in It's About Time and other participatory shows that either use Boal's or Catalyst's methods, the community members also change the play during the performance itself, either by giving verbal input or by physically intervening as actors. Finally, there are

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openness of the play itself.

[41] Filewod, CE 167.

those Social-Action Theatre projects which use no outsiders (either none at all or only in the role of facilitators) and which use only community members as actors in the play.

Players' Identification with the Community and Challenging the Community's Subjective Vision

With research processes that involve contacting the community members themselves or professionals who serve the community, the research and playbuilding process intended to get closer to the community and give them a voice in the play often leads the actors to develop a sense of identity with the community. This identification process means that the actors may be accepted on some level as a part of the community.[42] In cases like this, the players' mirroring of the community is sometimes likened to an act of love. In turn the performance itself serves to celebrate the community and acknowledge their experiences as important. Kershaw identifies "authenticating conventions"[43] as always implicitly indicating

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[42] Kershaw 156, 246.

[43] Authenticating conventions are "the conventions or signs through which the spectator establishes a relationship between the 'fictions' of performance and the nature of the 'real world' of his/her socio-political experience" (Kershaw 25-6 [citing Elizabeth Burns, Theatricality: a study of convention in the theatre and in social life (London: Longman, 1972) 31.]).

> an interest in, and often a respect for, the socio-political world which they represented, over and above their explicit significations. We might say such authenticating conventions always celebrate their source by raising its public importance through performance.[44]

Of course, such identification between the actors and community cannot always be taken for granted. Often the preconceptions of either the actors or the community can act as at least a preliminary barrier to mutual acceptance and understanding. The most striking example of this kind of barrier was the Catalyst actors' relationship to the parolees and prisoners that they tried to get to know in the research process of the play. Each of the actors had to confront his or her feelings about crime, especially violent crime. In addition to their fundamental values the amount of difference in the actors' and the prisoners' experience also acted as a barrier to complete identification. "[T]he play could not become a prison version of *The Farm Show*."[45]

Given that the players may identify closely with the community they are playing to, it then varies from company to company whether they choose to challenge their audience's subjective vision of their own situation. Even when the players are representatives of the community that the theatre is created with and for they may through this process develop opinions that set them apart from the group.[46] Kershaw shows how it may be possible to question an audience's beliefs by playing with rhetorical and authenticating conventions.[47] Filewod suggests that when the research process is oriented toward getting the facts rather than getting closer to the community, the company is more likely to assert views that challenge the audience's beliefs.[48] One example was the Globe Theatre's No. 1 Hard, in which the company explicitly attacked a cherished belief of the audience by showing the co-op system that the wheat farmers were so proud of to be a moral failure because it is operated on capitalist rather than socialist principles.[49] In contrast, Twenty-Fifth Street Theatre's Paper Wheat, which dealt with the same subject, for the most part simply embodied the feelings of the community toward the co-ops and gained their approval by eliciting feelings of nostalgia.[50]

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[44] Kershaw, pp. 156, 246; Filewod, *CE* 120 (Citing Chris Brookes, "Useful Theatre in Sally's Cove," *This Magazine* 8.2 [1974] 6.), 121, 122, 139; Usmiani 46 (Citing her interview with Paul Thompson).

[45] Filewod, *CE* 123-4, 165-6.

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[46] For example, in an article describing two "popular-theatre" projects that Jan Selman facilitated and directed in the North West Territories, she writes that for the play created in Pond Inlet, the project was taken up by an already established professional community theatre company, Tununiq. She comments that this project was less effective in terms of leading to organisation for change than another project in Fort Franklin in which the members of the theatre company came together specifically out of concern for the issue (which was family violence): "The projects clarified one of the contradictions of popular theatre work. As a theatre company forms, its focus moves away from community and towards the production of theatre. In the very act of defining themselves as a theatre group, the individuals separate themselves from the issues and lives of the community" (Jan Selman, "Three Cultures, One Issue," Canadian Theatre Review 53 [1987]: 19).

[47] See pages 47-51.

[48] Filewod CE 41, 88, 91, 98, 124.

[49] Filewod, CE 80, 88.

A related issue to challenging an audience's cherished beliefs is how to get beyond the official stories and histories that people tell themselves and that might be deeply ingrained in the traditions and conventions of the community. For Catalyst, this objective meant finding a way to reflect prisoners' real feelings and self-knowledge rather than simply the front they put up to protect themselves in the prison environment. When the company tried to address this problem by having each of the main characters in their monologues to the audience tell two different versions of their own story, the second representing the sincere version, the prisoners took this second version as a lie and would no longer trust that character or accept him as one of them. But when the company used instead a metaphor (a turtle with its head and feet withdrawn into its shell) to suggest the character's awareness of his true situation, the prisoners responded positively and with apparent understanding.[51]

Kershaw writes of the British "community-oriented" theatre that during their research many of the companies looked for the hidden and suppressed histories and obscure information about the current situation of a community.

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[50] Filewod, CE 91, 98.
[51] Filewod, CE 172-3.

The fact that they had unearthed the information and then presented it to the community in the play helped incorporate the company into the community in the eyes of the spectators. However, because the material was implicitly critical of the status quo (which is why it had been suppressed), it was also a way of introducing oppositional ideologies into the play. In this way the company was able to balance giving the community a voice with challenging some of its perceptions.[52]

Social-Action Theatre companies may also incorporate the views of others outside the community or with a marginal position within the community in their plays. One of the participatory scenes in It's About Time depicts a prisoner who receives a visit from his wife. The scene ends on a bitter note when the wife tells the husband that she will have to skip the next visit and that she is thinking about taking a job in another city. He suspects her of being unfaithful. After the scene is over the actor prompts participation from the audience by turning to them and simply saying, "that fucking bitch". The audience's responses are then used to create a letter that the husband writes to the wife. But the audience has no input into the letter the wife writes to the husband or the wife's decision concerning the relationship. In this way the play acknowledges that the prisoners have no control over their loved ones on the outside. It brings in and makes the audience aware of another independent point of view over which they have no control. According to Filewod it accomplishes this task by building on the identification with the husband and "placing it in a wider dramatic context". A less successful attempt to incorporate a view that is outside the dominant experience of the community is the women's scene in The Mummers 1974 documentary play Buchans: A Mining Town.[53] Filewod comments that the scene (in which the actor plays a miner's wife describing how many sandwiches and lunches she makes every week, piling detail upon detail until her monologue disintegrates into nonsense and hysteria) "is a comic interlude rather than a serious expression of a condition of life. . . . [I]t is a depersonalized comment, at odds with the carefully developed individuality of the miners."[54]

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[52] Kershaw 246.

Sometimes the source of a company's funding means that it has no choice as to whether to incorporate a view within the play that is extrinsic to the dialogue between actors and audience. For example, Catalyst's shows were often sponsored by a social agency. This was a rich source of funding for the theatre, but it also meant that each contract brought with it implicit censorship. Often a company must choose between perfect freedom of expression and survival. In the British Alternative Theatre movement of the 1970s, this was a theme that pervaded the whole movement:

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[53] The play was directed by Chris Brookes, and the actor/creators were Allen Booth, Donna Butt, Lee J. Campbell, Howard Cooper, Bembo Davies, and Connie Kaldor (Filewod, CE 123).

[54] Filewod, CE 139, 178.

> the crisis conditions of the 1970s frequently posed companies with fundamental issues of survival and integrity. . . . On the one hand, the expanding size and status of the movement were bolstered, in a grudging kind of way, by the state (through the funding system), by increasing rapprochement with the mainstream theatre sectors, and by the slow but certain influx of alternative theatre practitioners into posts in education and the media. On the other hand, the tightening grip of neo-conservatism . . . led to a spectacular strengthening of resistance and ideological opposition, especially when attempts were made to suppress or censor the work of radical companies. . . . Hence, the increased dependence on the state can be read as both a prudent political tactic used to stay in oppositional business and a craven accommodation to the status quo.

Groups that were radical ran the risk of either being censored or receiving no funds. In Canada, the explicitly radical activities of The Mummers made it very difficult for the group to get provincial funding.[55]

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[55] Filewod, CE 80, 122, 150, 154; Kershaw 147; Van Erven 175.

Shared Experience, Shared Expression, and Ensemble

Because it is most typically created collectively, Social-Action Theatre, in addition to incorporating the views of the community, unites the artistic impulses, emotions, and ideas of many artists into one shared expression. Ideally, it creates a true ensemble, not just in terms of a shared artistic vocabulary and sense of cohesion but also in terms of the cohesion that comes from sharing a common purpose and experience. There is an added dimension to the concept of ensemble in Social-Action Theatre which is not present in most other kinds of theatre. This added dimension comes from the fact that the play is created collectively from the shared experiences of the performers. Because of this process, the material points back to the people behind the players, not only for the audience but also for the players themselves. Ideally, as the players get to know each other more as individuals, they become closer as a group, a true community in themselves. If the players are creating a play based on their own first-hand experiences, then when they look at each other, they are aware of each others' individual stories and how through the play-building process these stories have become linked. If they are building the play mostly through research, then they develop a sense of ensemble from a shared sense of purpose or from their shared experiences of researching the play and identifying with the community.[56] In writing about theatre in which outsiders create a play about a community, Filewod states:

> It is apparent that certain subjects, more readily than others, can unite a group of actors into a genuine collective capable of expressing a synthesis of individual attitudes and discoveries. In collective creation, the group mind must reconcile its differences to create a community statement. This can happen one of two ways: either the cast is united by ideological consensus in the analysis of the subject . . . or the circumstances of making the play become a shared experience which then becomes part of the substance of the play itself.[57]

For example, for the Globe Theatre's No. 1 Hard, in the course of doing the research for the play and using the material in rehearsal, the actors began to come together in a common feeling "that they had a responsibility to use the play to make a statement and that the play could enter the debate then raging in the industry."[58] The example of Theatre *Passe Muraille*'s The Farm Show illustrates how actors can develop a sense of ensemble out of the shared experience of researching the play: "The Farm Show is not simply about an Ontario farming community. Rather, it is a play about the experiences the actors passed through in the course of researching the material. . . . In that sense, the actors are a community looking at a community."[59] In The Farm Show the players were aware of each cast member's experiences of researching the play and how, through the playbuilding process, all of their experiences had become linked.

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[56] Filewod, CE 35, 84-5; Bappa and Etherton 127.

[57] Filewod, CE 35.

[58] Filewod, CE 84-5 (Citing Rex Deverell, 'Medicare!'; Kramer interview).

The importance of this process of building an ensemble and commitment through the research process was acknowledged by Guy Sprung, who directed the second version of Twenty-Fifth Street Theatre's Paper Wheat, when rather than rely on the work done by the previous company of actors, he began the research and creative process anew with the new group.[60] In addition, the extreme conditions of trying to come up with new material in a group in a set amount of time can also contribute to the ensemble: In the case of The Mummers' Buchans: A Mining Town, "the worry, debate, and frustration of the process became a source of creative strength to the cast, and their growing commitment to the community resulted in a play of perhaps unexpected dramatic intelligence."[61]

Openness of Play that Reflects Shared Experiences and Openness Through Authentication

Becoming an ensemble is an integral part of the process of arriving together at an interpretation of the community's situation with regard to an issue, a shared expression, which is then opened out to the audience. Because the play is based on aspects of experience that are shared (either those of the players themselves or of the community that is being researched), the play naturally "opens up" to include the voices of those in the audience with similar experiences. I am defining this concept of openness broadly to include not only the process that Kidd describes of how participatory plays can be open to actual changes and development by the audience but also to the processes set in motion during non-participatory Social-Action Theatre events. For non-participatory Social-Action Theatre events the audience members may feel that the play is open to the addition of their own experiences and that, similarly, the content of the play can in a sense (although not literally) be developed through discussion or perhaps through the audience members participation in workshops in which the issues are explored through "popular theatre" exercises or through the development of their own play.

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[59] Filewod, CE 36.
[60] Filewod, CE 99.
[61] Filewod, CE 127; Bappa and Etherton 127.

According to Ross Kidd, who describes the practices of third-world participatory "popular theatre" as influenced by Freire and Boal,[62] a play will not be open to the spectators nor will their participation be meaningful unless they themselves create the initial scenario. He writes that if outsiders present a play, then it will allow no room for genuine analysis; the ideas will be self-contained because they will reflect the train of thought natural to an outsider rather than an insider's perspective, and the analysis embodied in the play will be, as it were, "finished". In contrast, if the people themselves create the initial scenario, then it will leave room for development through analysis and discussion, which can then be translated into a new, slightly altered scenario. In this way, "popular theatre" in the third world provides the spectators with the opportunity to develop and clarify their own point of view. "The [Freirean] code then is . . . the drama-which-is-never-finished, constantly being restructured to extend the insights of the participants."[63]

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[62] Boal along with other practitioners interested in "openness" such as Kidd in the third-world and Jan Selman in Canada have developed dramatic structures which encourage openness.

In relation to Kidd's view, one could argue that, as long as a play is a shared expression created in such a way as to generate an insider's point of view, the play will be open to the addition of the spectators' views and experiences and the audience's participation will be meaningful. In other words, the community need not be the primary creators or performers of the original scenario or play. For example, The Mummers were commissioned to create a play about the downtown, east-end section of St.

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[63] Ross Kidd, "Popular Theatre, Conscientization, and Popular Organization" 23-24.

John's to try to create a sense of pride in the neighbourhood. They conducted research for the play by living in the area and taping conversations with people in the neighbourhood. The resulting play was called The East End Story, and the show was very successful in generating fresh interest and confidence in the community. In the case of No. 1 Hard, the preliminary research process did not even involve speaking directly to the farmers or wheat pool workers, but the players' careful research of the current problems in the grain industry that relied on written sources produced a play that was very successful in stimulating debate. These debates later resulted in changes to the script.[64]

Creating an expression that is open to the audience can involve drawing not only from aspects of personal experience that are shared but also from the targeted community's history and contemporary problems and incorporating into the play local slang, dialects, symbols, cultural forms and folklore.[65] Filewod writes of Buchans: A Mining Town, "In general, the music of the play is taken from actual sources: the ASARCO [mining company] theme song is used to signal the corporate financial bulletins, and the striking miners in the last third of act 2 sing refrains from a actual strike songs."[66] Sometimes companies also choose to use popular art forms and forms from modern popular culture, which they assume properly belong to their audiences.[67] This practice has, in the past, stimulated a debate as to whether these forms are too reactionary to be used to create theatre that is intended to promote change. One example of how using a popular art form might raise concerns about compromising the subversive values of a play is a British project in which a nativity play, The Business of Good Government, was created in 1960 for the village of Brent Knoll by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy to be performed by amateur actors from the community.[68] Kershaw outlines a debate between British playwrights John McGrath and David Edgar about whether it was proper for politically committed theatre to use such forms. Edgar maintained that these forms had once belonged to the people but had been corrupted by ideological appropriation and were now used to maintain the status quo. McGrath maintained that these associations could be overcome if the forms were treated in a critical way. Kershaw explains that in reality, these forms never belonged to the people but were almost always

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[64] Kidd, "Popular Theatre and Political Action in Canada" 4-5.

[65] Filewod, CE 101, 128, 170; Kershaw 114; Van Erven 124-5, 178-9.

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[66] Filewod, CE 143.
[67] Kershaw 143; Van Erven 178-9.
[68] Kershaw 113.

> part of a complex dialectic through which conflicting ideologies, conflicting interests, have been staged. A major aspect of that dialectic has been the way popular performers and audiences engaged with ideological tensions set in motion by the interaction between rhetorical and authenticating conventions. For example, in nineteenth-century music hall there was often a tension between, on the one hand, the explicit celebration of working class values of collectivity, through, say, the authenticating stereotypical conventions of a coster song, and, on the other hand, the implicit celebration of individualist and hierarchical values represented rhetorically by the star who sang the song. Such contradictions were part of the ideological spice that made the form attractive (Bratton 1986: 111-30).[69]

Of course, there are some forms which are inherently subversive. For example, The Mummers got their name in 1972 by reviving the traditional Newfoundland Christmas play of St. George. Brookes believed that Mummering (in which players travelled through the streets and arrived unannounced at parties during the Christmas season and other people traditionally visited houses in disguise over the Twelve Days) had been outlawed in Newfoundland in the late nineteenth century because it represented more than just a nuisance but a political threat to those in power. He writes that "the mummers were considered to have the power to commit gross breaches of social decorum and to wreak retribution against persons who had over the year incurred the wrath of the community."[70]

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[69] Kershaw 114 (citing John Arden, The Business of Good Government [London: Methuen, 1963] 5), 143, 153-4 (citing John McGrath, A Good Night Out--Popular Theatre: Audience, Class, and Form [London: Methuen, 1981] 59-60; David Edgar, The Second Time as Farce: Reflections on the Drama of Mean Times [London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988] 233; and J.S. Bratton, ed., Music Hall: Performance and Style [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986] 111-30).

Whereas I have said that a collective creation (because it is a shared expression) is more "open" to an audience than a personal expression, Filewod implies that collective expressions tend to be more objective than the work of individual artists and that the "quality of imagination" of a collective makes its work comprehensible to the outsider because it expresses a "public" as opposed to a "private" vision. His assumption seems to be that a theatre company can construct an expression that will also belong to the audience. In order to construct such an expression the company must keep the needs of the audience in mind so as not to arrive at something too idiosyncratic, subjective, or personal. According to Filewod, the work of a collective tends to be more objective because the process promotes a critical perspective as a result of the need to account for differences in point of view that emerge from individuals. In contrast, his underlying assumption for individual artists seems to be that their work tends to be subjective, idiosyncratic, and obscure. He asserts that both individual writers and collectives are capable of expressing a public vision, but he implies that the quality of imagination of a collective is more suited to portraying actual situations objectively.[71] Van Erven echoes Filewod's opinion when he writes that "['popular-theatre'] plays are far from being idiosyncratic expressions of individual artistic sensibilities."[72] Van Erven brings up an objection to these assumptions when he cites a comment of Timothy Wiles, who "wondered whether 'workers really need or want this kind of theatrical art' and whether, 'they occasionally feel talked down to by its oversimplifications.'"[73]

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[70] Filewod, CE 113-4, 143.

Filewod's underlying assumption that collective creations tend to be more critical or objective than the work of individual artists is problematic. I call it an underlying assumption because he does not state his case in such a way that one could hold him to this view. He writes, for example:

> There is ample evidence to suggest that of all forms of dramatic creation, collective creation is best equipped to embody and reflect actively the objectivity of social life. . . . This is not to say that only the collective is capable of creating objectivist drama; that is

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[71] Alan Filewod, "Collective Creation: Process, Politics, and Poetics," Canadian Theatre Review 34 (19--): 47-8.

[72] Please note that Van Erven defines the term "popular theatre" differently from the third-world practitioners.

[73] Van Erven 176, 178.

> obviously not so, and some collectives are so subjective in their artistic vision as to be virtually incomprehensible to the outsider (I am thinking here of Italy's *Communa Baires.*) Once more, it is the quality of imitation that differs [not necessarily the end result]. Because collective creation synthesizes the artistic responses of a number of individuals it must proceed from some kind of shared analysis, which differs from the private vision of the individual because it needs some kind of critical perspective to account for the differences within the collective.[74]

Although his language is cautious, he implies that the work of collectives tends to be more objective because of the shared analysis that is part of the process and that the work of an individual artist is more typically subjective and less comprehensible to an outsider. It is true that the process of shared analysis might promote objectivity but not to any greater degree than would an individual artist's powers of analysis and observation. The collective process might offset any weakness in the company or augment any strength; but this fact does not lead to the conclusion that collectives would, even given an ideal situation in which all of its members held a critical attitude toward their subject matter, tend to be more objective than individuals.

Furthermore, Filewod implies that because the work of collectives tends to produce a "public vision," it would tend to be comprehensible to the outsider. I would say that it is not a question of comprehension, because a spectator may easily understand even a very personal expression if it somehow crystallises some aspect of his or her experience. Rather, it is a question of whether the work can "open up" to include the views of the spectator. As I said before, a personal expression is less likely to be "open" than an expression that is the result of the pooling of views and experiences. Filewod also writes that the "public vision" of the work of collectives is "designed to embody the consciousness and express the experience" of a target audience.[75] Once again, this claim is essentially true when the theatre is created with and for the same community, but not as true when the theatre is created for a more broadly-defined community. I believe Filewod's implicit assumption that theatre which expresses a "public vision" is more objective, comprehensible, or that it necessarily belongs to its target audience, is inaccurate; nevertheless his "public vision" is a useful concept for pointing to the essential difference between the work of a collective and that of individual artists: that a collective arrives at a shared expression.

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[74] Filewod, CTR 34, 47-8.

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[75] Alan Filewod, "Marginalization of the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance in the Discourse of Canadian Theatre History," Theatre History in Canada 10.2 (1989): 204.

Spectators' and Players' Awareness of Each Other as People

Another major aspect of the dynamic of Social-Action Theatre is that the players and audience are aware of each other as people rather than just as people in their role as entertainers and spectators. As already noted, the audience may be aware of the people behind the players because the play reflects their shared experiences. In addition, a special relationship may be created between performers and audience or amongst the audience because of the audience's relationship to a particular venue or to fellow community members who are actors. A related point is that the theatre builds on the spectators' awareness of their communal ties, ideally strengthening these ties through the process of shared analysis of issues that the play provokes, but without necessarily reinforcing the group's current ideology. Kershaw describes two cases: John Arden's and Margaretta D'Arcy's The Business of Good Government, which was performed by amateur actors from the community in their own church; and a second by the same writers, "Ars Longa, Vita Brevis", first performed in 1963, in which the Kirkbymoorside Girl Guide Troupe improvised the dialogue for Arden's scenario.[76] Kershaw argues that in both cases the special relationship between the audience, the performance site, and the players allowed Arden and D'Arcy to deliver a subversive message to conservative audiences without causing a riot and allowed them to get the spectators to question their own values.[77]

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[76] Kershaw 117.

Kershaw maintains that the spectators' cherished beliefs can be challenged without alienating them as long as there is a balance between the authenticating conventions and the "rhetorical conventions".[78] He explains,

> in contexts which were unquestionably conservative, oppositional messages had to be implicit: hence authenticating conventions might produce a reassuring 'possible world' while rhetorical conventions drew on carnivalesque techniques in order covertly to subvert the 'world' represented. Or in a more liberal context the rhetorical conventions might promise reassurance--a good night out--while authenticating conventions used satirical agitprop to question the more reactionary elements in the context of performance.[79]

Thus, for example, in The Business of Good Government Arden and D'Arcy aimed to reassure the audience with rhetorical conventions by using all of the traditional elements of a nativity play. They also used many conventions of church ritual, which could have put the spectators in the role of participants, celebrants, and worshippers rather than simply audience members. The other non-illusionistic aspects of the performance style "encourage[d] an awareness of the _actual_ community networks formed by the relationships between the performers and their friends and relatives in the audience." Kershaw suggests that Arden and D'Arcy created this atmosphere in order to implicate the audience in the action of the play and then set them up to question their own conservative ideology. According to Kershaw, they challenged the audience through the character of Herod who was cast as a reasonable politician who ordered the slaying of Jesus in the expedient interest of the entire community (to preserve an unstable political alliance with Rome). They gave Herod a speech that echoed the theme of the then-conservative prime minister's election campaign speech, Harold Macmillan's "You've never had it so good" speech. The theory is that the politically conservative audience, in their church-going mode, could have identified with the community that the character Herod is addressing and thus have been implicated in the order to slay Jesus. Kershaw goes on to say,

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[77] Kershaw 113, 115; 120-2.

[78] "Rhetorical conventions are "'the devices of exposition that enable the audience to understand the play.'. . . They produce the signals that enable us to classify different shows as belonging to the same genre or form" (Kershaw 25-6 [citing Elizabeth Burns, Theatricality: a study of convention in the theatre and in social life (London: Longman, 1972) 31]).

[79] Kershaw 84.

> The representation of Herod clearly is intended to provoke a crisis in the audience, and the crisis is about the nature of good government. Given the declining status in world politics, such issues were almost certain to have much more than a local resonance.

Kershaw implies that the audience could have associated Herod's decision with contemporary conservative political choices, which sacrifice people's true interests in the name of expediency.[53]

That the audience would make such a connection seems to me to be a very big assumption on the part of Kershaw. The members of the audience would have had to have a very lucid understanding of their own political choices and beliefs to connect them to Herod's expedient decision to slay Jesus. Also the atmosphere that the play promoted might have reinforced their sense of "rightness" as a community and made the spectators resist any call to judge themselves critically.

In the example of "Ars Longa, Vita Brevis", Kershaw argues that the theme of the anti-authoritarian play (about a militaristic art teacher) may have been brought home to the conservative audience despite the fact that the play made no allusions at all to the community. He argues it could have worked because the girl guides who performed it and who had improvised the dialogue based on Arden's scenario, were from the community and represented the values of the community. In addition, because they were using their own words, the play was accessible to the community. Yet they were enacting a theme that was subversive. He writes that the effect was further heightened because the Girl Guides are a quasi-militaristic group and because the actors were children. The presence of the Girl Guides underlined the play's childlike quality of playing at reality and yet giving a clear-eyed perspective of the world. "[A]t the moment that the show mounts a radical critique of authority through its authenticating conventions, its rhetorical conventions are used to disarm criticism of its critique."[81]

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[53] Kershaw 115-17.

Once again, Kershaw is taking a lot for granted, namely that the spectators would make such lucid connections between the themes of the play and their own values. It is conceivable that both The Business of Good Government and "Ars Longa, Vita Brevis" may have made some individuals in the audience question their values. But Kershaw argues that there was a mechanism working in both performances that would have provoked an ideological crisis for the audiences as a group, which is possible, but he fails to demonstrate how it could work.

A special relationship is, in fact, created between performers and audience or amongst the audience because of the audience's relationship to a particular venue or to fellow community members who are the actors; but it is not necessarily, as Kershaw suggests, one in which the audience's values are being subtly subverted. Rather, it could simply be that, as with the example of The Business of Good Government, being on its own turf can make the audience aware of its communal ties. Thus, when the issues of the play are highlighted, there can be a sense of the community coming together to deal with particular issues and concerns that the play addresses. Ideally, the process for the spectators echoes that of the players in that they begin to develop a shared point of view, but not at the expense of an awareness of individuality. When the play is on the audience's turf, it also increases the likelihood that the players will be alert to the spectators as people and as a unique community rather than just as anonymous members of an anonymous audience. Only when the players are in this mode will there be a chance for the players and audience to truly engage in honest and meaningful dialogue.

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[81] Kershaw 121-2.

The players as well as the spectators can also be included in the feeling of community, especially if the players are from the community or have some other special relationship to the community. Sometimes it is a relationship that is the result of the participatory research done with the community during the playbuilding process or the result of other contacts with the community.[82]

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[82] Kershaw 156, 246.

An example in which participatory research helped to establish a special relationship between the players and community that could then be carried over into the performance itself was Catalyst Theatre's participatory play, It's About Time, directed by Jan Selman. Selman and the company members, Jane Heather, Ed Lyszkiewicz, and Robert Winslow, and community coordinator Anthony Hall began preparation for the play which was intended for prison and halfway house audiences by conducting interviews with volunteer prisoners at some of the halfway houses and prisons. Then at the halfway houses in Edmonton, at a federal prison in Drumheller, and a women's prison in Belmont they held workshops in which they used participatory scenes. In these workshops, the facilitators from Catalyst were able to learn about the situation at the prisons by having the volunteer prisoners suggest ideas for scenarios. Then the facilitators and sometimes the prisoners would act out the scenes, altering them according to the prisoner's suggestions. These workshops led to the creation of rough scenes for the play which were then brought back to the same institutions for the prisoners to make suggestions about how the scenes could be altered to reflect the situations portrayed in the scenes more accurately. Finally, even before the performance itself, the actors would talk informally to the audience as they entered the playing area. "They would find out valuable information about the particular institution to help them decide which version of the play to use." A participatory research process may not involve contact with the whole "community" that a company performs for, but the contacts that are made can give the players a slightly different status than if they walk in cold. Furthermore, those who participated in the workshops and those who were aware of the participation of the prisoners in the creation of the play may have had a feeling that the play in a sense belonged to them and thus may have felt a special connection to the company.

Spectators' Awareness of Issues as Directly Relevant to their Lives

Another major aspect that contributes to the dynamic of Social-Action Theatre is that the audience is aware of the issues raised by the play as directly relevant to their lives. This awareness can be created when the event is shaped as a forum for the introduction, discussion, and analysis of issues. The most obvious example of this approach is Boal's Forum-style theatre already described, and in the third-world techniques based on the Forum style. However, this awareness can also be created by groups that use traditional agitprop techniques, even though there is not as much opportunity for actual

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[83] Filewod, CE 167, 169.

[84] Jan Selman, personal interview, 20 May 1994.

participation. One example of a production that used such techniques is the Globe Theatre's No. 1 Hard:

> No. 1 Hard analyzes the grain industry as a political struggle in which the farmer audiences are still engaged. This is reinforced by the inclusion of up-to-date reports on topical current events and political discussions with the audience following the performances.[85]

The audience may be aware of the issues raised in the play as directly relevant to their lives when the community has agreed to the need for theatre and for dialogue between itself and the theatre company. Meeting the community's needs means that the play and event are useful to the audience, relevant to its concerns. Either the play is created for a particular audience or the play is created to meet the needs of the players and then brought to communities whose interests coincide with those of the players. But in all cases if there is some contact between the players and audience outside of the performance itself, it may help to ensure that the Social-Action Theatre event is shaped to meet the needs of the community.

> Many companies [in the 70s], but particularly the community theatre companies, joined a growing trend to include workshops and other forms of participatory activity in their programming. . . . For community based companies the aim was to get 'closer' to the community so that the design of projects could be more fully determined

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[85] Filewod, CE 89.

> by the community as part of the process of empowerment.[56]

Filewod reports that in the case of It's About Time the company went in with the idea of creating a show about adjusting to life on the outside, but during a series of participatory workshops with the prisoners prior to the performance found that this focus was irrelevant to the situation of most of their audience, whose immediate concern was how to survive inside. The company redefined the show to stimulate a dialogue between seasoned cons who knew the system and those who had just been imprisoned for the first time. Although most of the prisoners responded positively to the show, one of the actors, Jane Heather, stated in a panel discussion at the 1983 Festival of Popular Theatre that "[t]here were a couple of women I worked with that to the very end were still saying, 'I have nothing to say to other cons whatsoever. I still don't know why we're doing this.'"[57] Perhaps it is not always possible for everyone's participation to be meaningful, but if the community as a whole finds the experience at least potentially valuable, then one can argue that the theatre is meeting a need. Bappa and Etherton point out that in the third world plays will be totally irrelevant to their audiences' concerns unless a thorough political and economic analysis of the particular situation is included in the research and playbuilding process. "Those who are oppressed already know of their oppression; and a play which delineates this oppression superficially tells them nothing which they do not know already."[88]

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[56] Kershaw 141.

[57] Filewod CE 163, 180 (Citing Jane Heather, "It's About Time" public seminar, Bread and Roses Festival of Popular Theatre, Edmonton, 23 June 1983).

Ideology

The example of Arden and D'Arcy's The Business of Good Government shows how problematic the goal of meeting the community's needs can be. In this case, the community's need was for a nativity play for its annual Christmas celebration. To meet the need of the community, Arden and D'Arcy, who were both committed to creating theatre for social change, had to write within a religious tradition that (in this context) reinforced the status quo.[89] The problem here may have been that the community had a need which could be fulfilled by theatre but which did not coincide with the ideology of the two writers. Arden and D'Arcy wrote a nativity play with subtle subversive messages, but as I have shown, it is very unlikely that this message would have hit home, at least in the way that Kershaw describes. It ended up fulfilling the community's need because it was participational, it brought the community together, and it was entertaining.

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[88] Bappa and Etherton 127.

[89] Kershaw 113.

But Kershaw fails to show that it had the potential to generate the kind of social change envisioned by the authors or to make the audience aware of the issues as directly relevant to their lives. Some would argue that it and other shows like it that celebrate a community set the stage for social change by building the self-esteem of a community that has become dispirited. Ross Kidd, for example, writes that creating theatre with the peasants using their own traditional cultural forms and forms of expression can build a community's self-esteem and self-confidence, a first step for a conscientization process. "People's testimonies, songs, sketches, dances, poetry, drumming, etc., are something that people are good at, and this initial experience of achievement reinforces their self-confidence and sparks their interest."[93] However, for Social-Action Theatre, the implicit goal is not to reinforce a group's traditional ideology but to help the audience arrive at a better understanding of who they are as a constantly evolving community, using the methods already described to engage with the issues, challenge the audience's cherished beliefs, fears, values, reflexes, prejudices, and commitments. Reinforcing and celebrating a community's traditional ideology is problematic for Social-Action Theatre for many reasons. Almost inevitably a traditional ideology will misrepresent the viewpoint and legitimate interests of groups within the community that may be considered marginal. In general, reinforcing or celebrating traditional ideology will have a censoring effect on the play itself or on the outcome of the dialogue generated by the play. For example, Filewod describes a scene of The Farm Show about a reclusive man named Charlie Wilson who was deceased at the time that *Passe Muraille* was researching the show. He explains that because the play was created from the community's point of view and celebrated the community's values and image of itself, the portrait of Charlie Wilson tends to define him "as a man among friends, not an outsider but 'one of us,' and the real hardships of his life suggested in the scene are softened." Filewod goes on to say, "It is easy to forget when watching The Farm Show that the actors spoke to only a few members of the community as a whole, and that they could only express certain aspects of it."[91]

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[93] Kidd, "Popular Theatre, Conscientization, and Popular Organization" 22.

For Social-Action Theatre, ideology is crucial, not in the sense of ideology as dogma but as the "system of beliefs, values, fears, prejudices, reflexes, and commitments" that influence our actions.[92] The facilitators and players are ideally aware of their own ideology, in other words, what they stand for. When their ideology does not coincide with that of the community, then they can find some common ground; but ideally, without compromising the integrity of the company or the community. Ideally, the Social-Action Theatre group's ideology is not used to censor the dialogue generated by the play, only to define and delineate where its goals are one with those that emerge from the community and where the players and community must, to maintain integrity, go their separate ways.[93]

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[91] Filewod, CE 41.

[92] Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (London: Oxford UP, 1970) 4.

Sometimes a company will begin with an explicitly stated, dogmatic ideology which defines the company's reason for doing Social-Action Theatre. Thus, for example, in the case of The Mummers, Chris Brookes formed the group to promote Newfoundland nationalism and indigenous culture, and he himself is committed to a militant socialist ideology.[94] In another example, John McGrath "set up the Scottish 7:84 Theatre Company as a collective determined to promote Marxist analysis of local history through subregional tours of shows which celebrated Celtic resistance to centuries of repression and exploitation."[95]

Depending on the research process, playbuilding process, and style of performance, this ideological commitment is sometimes related in a very straightforward way to the message of the company's play. For example, The Mummers first major play, Newfoundland Night, is a Neo-Marxist Nationalist interpretation of Newfoundland history which demonstrates how throughout the province's history "the rights of the working class and the Newfoundlanders' dreams of independence [have been] suppressed by the merchant class which supports the crown." The research for and creation of Newfoundland Night was heavily informed by the ideology with which the group started. The style of the play is a satiric revue that functions as agitprop.[96] The Scottish 7:84's play, The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil, draws a parallel between Scottish interests being pushed aside by foreign oil companies and the introduction of the Cheviot sheep in the Highlands in the nineteenth century, which forced people off their land. Here again the ideological orientation of the group strongly influenced the message of the show. But in this case, the style of the show was not so unambiguously radical; because in order to make the show accessible, the group adopted a popular form of entertainment, the ceilidh.[97] In some cases, ideology will shape not only the interpretation of facts but also how characters are portrayed in general. For example, Augusto Boal's Marxist orientation led him to a materialist understanding of character: what a person is, even what he or she looks like, is determined by the person's economic and political place in society.[98] When work is heavily influenced by a set dogmatic ideology, then it may succeed in making the audience aware of issues as directly relevant to their lives, but it is not the kind of theatre which I have described, which must leave room for the players and community to arrive at an interpretation of reality together. Thus, Kidd distinguishes between true "popular theatre" and early experiments in "popular theatre" in which

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[93] See, for example, Ross Kidd and Krishna Kumar, "Co-opting Freire: A Critical Analysis of Pseudo-Freirean Adult Education," Economic Political Weekly 3-10 January 1981: 27-36.

[94] Filewod, CE 112.

[95] Kershaw 138.

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[96] Filewod, CE 117.

[97] Kershaw 138.

> [g]roups of middle-class activists produced plays based on their research into and analysis of the peasants' (or workers') reality and performed them for peasants (or workers) as the stimulus for group or community discussion. . . .[A]nalysis tended to be propagated from above and preached as a faith rather than rationalized through people's own processes of reflection and dialogue.[99]

Newfoundland Night and The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil are agitprop, rather than Social-Action Theatre, in the sense that they begin with a set way of interpreting the issues that they address. Although these two examples involve cases where a company was influenced by ideology as dogma, the same thing can happen when a group's ideology in its broad sense dominates a play to the exclusion of letting the point of view of the audience evolve.

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[98] Boal 127-8. This view was also shaped by his experiences in Latin America, where peasants' and workers' bodies could be noticeably deformed by their work.

[99] Kidd, "Popular Theatre, Conscientization, and Popular Organization" 23.

However, the relationship between the explicit ideological orientation and the implicit ideological meanings of a play can be more complex. For example, although The Mummers' Buchans: A Mining Town did, as a result of Brookes' allegiance to revolutionary socialism, define the history of the town in terms of the necessity for unionisation, it took no stand on any of the specific political questions raised by the play. The actors were chosen for their abilities and appearance rather than for their political beliefs, and their collective methods resulted in no cohesive political stance towards their material.[103]

In the case of Catalyst Theatre's It's About Time, the company's well-founded assumption that the problems inherent in the prisons were rooted in the system itself rather than in the individual and collective behaviour of the prisoners could not be applied to the project. This was an assumption tied to ideology in its broader sense rather than to ideology as dogma, and if the prisoners had agreed with this assumption, then it could have led, in an ideal case, to an event in which an interpretation of the situation could be arrived at together. However, the goal of the project could not be to change the system because the project was defined from the outset as a play that would help the prisoners do what they could to improve their situation while they were still inside.[101] Thus, an ideological orientation may not always translate into taking a stand, in part because of the variables always involved in making theatre, such as the choice of cast in Buchans: A Mining Town and the prisoners' lack of power in It's About Time.

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[103] Filewod, CE 124, 135.

The examples cited above bring up the question of the extent to which Social-Action Theatre provokes its audiences into a particular belief or point of view and the extent to which it allows the audience to arrive at its own conclusions. The company cannot be completely neutral. The ideal model for Social-Action Theatre is one in which there is genuine dialogue between players and community. The role of the company is more than that of a neutral facilitator because it is presenting a play, which is an expression of its own point of view, a point of view that the company has arrived at together. If this point of view is negated by the performance, then the expression might have little meaning; and whatever progress had been made on the issues within the group might be lost. Ideally, whatever they have found out through their research and playbuilding process is shared with their audiences; otherwise the performance is not honest. However, neither is the company's point of view imposed. In agitprop plays such as The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil and Newfoundland Night, the viewpoint of the players or playwright is imposed on the audience to the exclusion of any other views being expressed. The case of No. 1 Hard is more ambiguous because even though it uses agitprop techniques and expresses a definite point of view, it also tries to some extent to open up the discussion to the audience. To avoid coercing the audience, it is, as I have already suggested, necessary for the company to be honest with the target audience about its own ideological assumptions and to listen. As long as the company is neither listening to the community nor promoting an honest dialogue in which all feel free to participate fully, then the theatre is not Social-Action Theatre.

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[101] Filewod, CE 167.

One should not assume that there is always perfect consonance between the ideological orientation of a theorist or practitioner and his or her methodology. For example, Chris Brookes' socialism did not keep him from retaining ownership and organisational control of The Mummers Troupe, even when after 1975 the small pool of politically committed actors he had repeatedly hired formally protested that they wanted collective ownership. Brookes justified his decision by saying that if he were to follow loose democratic principles for running the group, he would not be able to avoid repeating mistakes from the Troupe's pre-1975 years.[102]

Whereas Boal seems to suggest that there is a direct link between his methods and his ideology, Filewod suggests that Boal's methods and the ideas of Freire that have influenced his methods are not inherently Marxist:

> Freire's work in Brazil led him to a revolutionary conclusion, but his theories are not necessarily revolutionary, and although he depends upon a Marxist analysis of society, his methodology is not inherently Marxist.[103]

Filewod explains that Boal's methodology is actually very similar to the methodology of sociodrama as developed by the Viennese psychotherapist J.L. Moreno in the 1930s. In sociodrama, it is assumed that the individual must develop his or her own spontaneity to find an appropriate role in society; he or she does not analyse the situation to find the way toward systemic change.

Boal, on the other hand, suggests that the theatre should be seen as a language, and like any other language, it has the potential for shaping how a person views reality. He states that the Theatre of the Oppressed is a rehearsal for revolution, and thus, it reshapes a person's view of the world into a revolutionary one.[104] According to Filewod, Catalyst, which independently developed a form of participatory theatre, used neither Moreno's nor Boal's assumption that a situation must be analysed according to an objective theory. Rather, in It's About Time, the analysis was done simply in terms of the prisoners' subjective understanding of the situation that was presented.[105] Thus, although the company began with an ideology in its broad sense, they allowed the spectator/participants' view to develop and emerge with each performance. Although Catalyst used different techniques from those used in the third world, It's About Time is truly what Kidd describes as the "drama-which-is-never-finished" because there are no right or wrong answers set by the ideology of the players or the audience. Rather, the answers evolve out of a dialogue between players and audience.

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[102] Filewod, CE 115-16.
[103] Filewod, CE 156.
[104] Boal 121.

Filewod suggests that there is always a danger of manipulating the spectators to make particular choices in Boal's technique in which the analysis is based on a dogmatic ideology and that the same danger exists in Stand Up for Your Rights, a participatory play Catalyst developed before It's About Time that used a technique much closer to that used in Boal's Forum theatre.[106] Another writer David Burgess argues that the methods used in both Stand Up for Your Rights and It's About Time pose problems for the audience that are genuinely open to any proposed reworking of the situation. Presumably based on his viewing of the televised version, Filewod writes:

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[105] Filewod, CE 161-3.

[106] The play directed by Anthony Hall was performed in 1981 and 1982 and was broadcast on CBC television in 1981. Filewod, CE 159-60.

> Although the scenes are developed in consultation with the audience, there must be an implicit 'correct' solution. In Stand Up for Your Rights Shelley has only one choice when her parents refuse to let her marry. She can surrender, or she can leave her home. Surrender is unacceptable, for it closes off any other possibilities. If the performance is honest, it will reflect the consciousness of the audience, who will see on stage the consequences of their own decisions. When this technique is put at the service of a specific political ideology that prescribes theoretical solutions, it can be manipulative. In Theatre Sans Detour's performance, which was modelled on Boal, the scene depicts a saleswoman who is to be laid off her job unless she agrees to date her manager. She is caught in a contradiction when her husband perceives this as an opportunity to achieve his desire to keep her at home. The only admissible solution to the problem is unionization. This solution is made evident in the scene by the mention that several other women are in the same situation.

Filewod writes that to avoid this kind of manipulation,

> the actors. . . must learn the authentic response of the person who lives the problem. . . . The actors must retain their expertise while accepting, and in a sense documenting, the consciousness of the audience. When directed toward specific ideological ends, the actors must avoid making an implicit critique of

> that consciousness. In performance, this touches on variables that are not easily controlled. Theatrical elements, such as costuming, stage movement, and the physical appearance of the actor, add a level of implicit comment.

Filewod explains that this potential danger exists not only in plays that are guided by a particular ideology but also in a play like Stand Up For Your Rights. David Burgess agrees with Filewod's claim that Forum theatre leads to giving the audience the impression that there are particular right or wrong answers, but he claims that Catalyst's work is different in this regard, not just in It's About Time, which uses animation instead of actual intervention, but in Stand Up for Your Rights:

> In the Catalyst shows scenes tended to be more genuinely 'open', that is the point at which the animations take place are lacunae in the script. The performers have no solutions to the problems their characters face, and so explore the audience intervention more thoroughly, and less fatalistically.[107]

Another point made by Filewod that seems to support Burgess' assessment is that whereas in Boal's Forum theatre the Joker not only explains the rules to the audience but represents a particular ideological point of view, the referee figure used in Stand Up for Your Rights

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[107] Burgess 35. Burgess uses "animation" to refer to both methods of eliciting audience response, both asking for verbal input and having the spectators physically intervene in the action. I use it only to refer to the former.

(played by Anthony Hall) simply explains the process to the mentally handicapped audience and stops the action to give them a chance to intervene.[108] In addition, Burgess' assessment of Stand Up for Your Rights seems to be more in line with Selman's statement cited by Filewod that "In a normal performance, the actors could find themselves spending two hours on one scene. Whenever possible, the audience was invited to step into the role on stage, to demonstrate how the actor might have responded to the problem more effectively."[109] If Filewod is basing his comments on the televised version then it is important to remember that that version was not a broadcasting of the live show but was adapted for the special needs of television. In the televised version, which was adapted by David Barnet, the time limits imposed by the broadcast meant that all of the spectators' suggestions could not be used but only those which would lead to a "successful" outcome. In the first version of the live play there was a problem with the actors only accepting the suggestions that they felt would work, but Hall and Selman were aware of this problem and struggled and, according to Selman, largely succeeded in getting the actors to use any suggestion given by the spectators.[110] Although I do agree with Filewod's statement that a set ideology that is used to guide the outcome of a performance is manipulative and does not truly reflect the audience's point of view, I would also argue that simply reflecting the ideology or consciousness of the audience is also manipulative in its own way. As I have already suggested, for Social-Action Theatre the audience's shared point of view is allowed to develop and emerge out of the playing, the participation, and the discussion because any ideology that already exists will not reflect the true experiences and opinions of everyone in the audience. Filewod's claim that this kind of theatre is always potentially manipulative because it is very hard to control the implicit comment added by such theatrical elements as costuming, stage movement and the physical appearance of the actor, is, of course, true. Although these elements are hard to control, a Social-Action Theatre company can check the effect of these elements by testing out scenes with the community and having them contribute to the content and style of the scene before the actual performance. However, the question of how theatrical elements affect the meanings of any given performance of a play goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

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[108] Filewod, CE 157, 163.

[109] Filewod, CE 158.

[110] Selman, personal interview, 20 May 1994.

Creating An Atmosphere of Informality and Directness

A final important aspect of the dynamic of Social-Action Theatre is that the play and event are structured in such a way that the audience does not slip into a mode in which the spectators' only expectation is to be passively entertained or stimulated. Social-Action Theatre strives instead to create an atmosphere characterised by informality and directness, in which the spectators can be equal and active participants in engaging with the issues.

Boal insists on theatre being understood not primarily as entertainment but as a weapon which should be given to the people themselves to use. He writes that although it is very common for the people to associate theatre with leisure or frivolity or for television and popular theatre forms to have distorted their conception of theatre, it is necessary to change that perception.[111] Nevertheless, most Social-Action Theatre companies give a lot of emphasis to making theatre entertaining for their audiences, if for no other reason than to furnish a good time and hold the audience's attention.[112] The point is not that Social-Action Theatre should not be entertaining, but that entertainment is not its main function.

Social-Action Theatre companies try to create an atmosphere of informality and directness, one in which the relationship between spectators and players approximates that between an audience and a street performer rather than that between actor and audience in a more traditional setting. More precisely, theatre groups dispense with the atmosphere of illusion and professional mystique associated with theatre and instead try to create an experience that feels like an extension of other kinds of egalitarian social gatherings. According to John McGrath, working-class audiences appreciate this directness. If you are direct then

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[111] Boal 127. Here, the term "popular theatre" is used to mean theatre that attracts large audiences.

[112] Filewod, CE 85-6, 171; Kershaw 158; Van Erven 180-2.

> The people who are actually involved in the meaning of [the show] don't think of it as didactic. They think of it as self-evident truths being stated publicly, socially, in an entertaining way and that is very much what theatre is about. Uncovering and giving expression to what is there, and to the realities of people's lives.[113]

A big factor in the creation of a relationship with the audience that is informal and direct lies in the framework or "horizon of expectations" for the performance, related to the gathering of the audience for the performance and also to the acting styles and types of characterisations. For example, in It's About Time and The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil the actors would chat informally as themselves with the audience before the start of the show. In Buchans, the actors wore the same kinds of clothes, work shirts and blue jeans that they had worn in their previous contacts with the community. Furthermore, the gathering of the audience focusses attention on the particular nature of the event and gives the audience a personal involvement with the event. Kershaw writes,

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[113] Kershaw 152 (Citing John McGrath 54).

> In all forms of Western theatre the gathering phase is designed to produce a special attitude of reception, to encourage the audience to participate in the making of the performance in a particular frame of mind. In other words, the conventions of gathering for a performance are intended to effect a transition from one social role into another, namely, the role of audience member or spectator. A crucial element in the formation of the role is the 'horizon of expectation'. . . the framework within which a piece of theatre will be understood as one type of performance event rather than another. . . . So the precise nature of the audience's role will vary.[114]

In general, the conventions of performance are non-illusionistic in the Brechtian sense and also try to eliminate as much as possible the sense of separation and hierarchy between actors and audience. So, for example, for *The Cheviot,the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil*,

> The company toured its own stage, which was only 18 inches high; props, costumes, musical instruments were visible on each side of it. During the show the actors frequently addressed the audience directly 'as themselves'; characters were adopted as costumes were put on, usually in view of the audience; individual actors played more than one character. . . . And the form of the show invites

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[114] Kershaw 24 [Citing Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London: Routledge, 1990].

> audience participation through signing, panto-style involvement and finally dancing.[115]

This effect of informal intimacy between performers and audience is sometimes multiplied because of the close spaces of the non-theatrical venues in which companies often perform.[116] Finally, contacts between the players and community outside of the performance itself can dispel the mystique surrounding the players and encourage a more equal relationship between players and audience.

In addition, according to Kershaw, the companies in Britain did things outside of the conventions of performance itself to encourage a feeling of equality between actors and audience and to give the community a sense that the theatre belonged to them:

> ["Community-oriented" theatre] often worked to create an 'open' or participatory ethic, which ranged from the participation of the community in the running of the company, through the booking of performances by the community, to the production of performances by the community itself, enabled by the professionals. Frequently, actors took on the role of aesthetic community workers, so to speak, or companies set up sub-units to develop particular participatory approaches.[117]

Social-Action Theatre forms based on Boal's Forum-style theatre and Catalyst's participatory theatre require a realistic approach because the characters on stage must simulate a real-life situation for the audience that the spectators can respond to as if it were real. Of course, in the examples from the third world, the audience members are often participating by playing characters much like themselves. This kind of theatre thus maintains a delicate balance between creating an illusion and enough of a sense of detachment to stimulate participation. It is done partly by trying to create the atmosphere of playing a game. For example, at the beginning of *It's About Time*, the actors play a game with the audience in which they ask for a topic and then improvise a conversation, first maintaining eye contact and then looking at the audience. This game creates the proper mind-set for the audience's participation in the rest of the play. According to Selman, the game which the cast called "High risk for actors", "showed that the play would be participatory; showed the actors risking as much if not more as we would ask them to risk during the participation; and revealed or demonstrated we would take their suggestions seriously and act upon them."[115]

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[115] Filewod, CE 40, 130, 169; Kershaw 156.
[116] Filewod, CE 170; Kershaw 115.
[117] Kershaw 143-4.

Filewod describes the methods that Catalyst used to encourage the participation of the prisoners. He indicates that the group began the play with a sequence the subject of which depended on the audience's responses but which most often examined "a specific issue arising out of a technical procedure" such as "obtaining a telephone call, a change of job, or a visit from the outside". The company knew that these practical problems, (which, because of the fast-paced nature of the scene, were suggested by the spectators most often), had straightforward solutions, ones that the people who had been in the system the longest could easily provide.[119] Also the opening rap song of the play acknowledged to the community that no matter how much research they have done with the prisoners, they would never really understand what it is like to be a criminal on the inside. The rap effectively introduced the idea that the expertise lies with the community rather than the actors. Later on in the play, the method the company often used to elicit a sincere response from the audience was to create an emotionally heated moment that would provoke an immediate emotional response from the spectators; the actors would play the scene, pause at a decision or crisis point and ask the spectators for their advice, comments, and point of view. Sometimes the appeal to the audience just consisted of an emotional outburst and turning toward the audience. The prisoners would give the actor the right to challenge them when they saw that he or she had just been through a volatile scene: "And that gets the fast answer back, which is then in the air, whether the guy retracts it or not, it's in the air and must be dealt with."[123]

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[115] Filewod, *CE* 169-71 and Jan Selman, personal interview, 25 April 1994.

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[119] Selman, personal interview, 20 May 1994.

Conclusions

Although this chapter has examined several different kinds of theatre for social change, the purpose has been to understand a particular kind of theatre that I have identified: a theatre that is created with, and sometimes by, the members of a community to express a shared point of view about some aspect of their own experience that they want to change.

In trying to understand Social-Action Theatre, I am focussing on one aspect of its dynamic, an aspect that creates an event that builds the foundation for a shared exploration of the issues addressed in the play. This aspect of the dynamic consists in the theatre event constituting a true encounter which points to real community ties and concerns, building on and strengthening these, but not at the expense of an awareness of individuality. In this kind of event, a community arrives together through theatre at an interpretation of reality with regard to a particular issue or concern.

My understanding of this dynamic is most influenced by the ideas of the third-world theorists and practitioners about how theatre can lead to change.

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[123] Filewod, CE 169, citing Jan Selman, personal interview, 28 June 1983; Filewod, CE 171, 175; Boal 132.

However, they limit themselves to describing a very particular kind of practice which involves working with communities that share strong group cultures and that have a long tradition of cultural forms on which to draw for performance. They also mostly focus only on theatre which involves the actual participation of the community in the creation and enactment of the play, a participatory theatre derived from the theories of Boal and Freire. My own focus is much broader, encompassing theatre that involves different levels of actual participation and companies that play to communities that are sometimes very broadly defined and that may not share a strong common cultural heritage. In addition, these companies do not necessarily share the third-world theorists' assumption that for theatre to lead to change it must be followed up immediately with organisation and action. Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, I have not adopted the Marxian assumptions upon which these practitioners' work is founded, but instead I have adopted a point of view closer to that which is implied by the early work of Catalyst Theatre, in which the ultimate aim is to foster a true participatory democracy in which the community arrives at an understanding based on the pooling of individual analyses and points of view.

Nevertheless, taking into account these differences, the third-world theorists still provide a model for how theatre can lead to change that has influenced my understanding of the dynamic of Social-Action Theatre. They state that through the process of providing a forum for dialogue and analysis theatre can create the impetus among a group to organise for change. They emphasise that this impetus will die unless the theatre event is set up as part of an ongoing process in which the theatre company itself, the leaders within a community, or an outside agency can step in to facilitate further dialogue and action. In theatre that involves the participation of the community in performance, the above works in conjunction with developing and strengthening culture and pride in culture by helping to revive or develop the community's confidence in its own new or traditional cultural forms and creative potential. The community's confidence in the creative domain can be transferred to confidence in its ability to act in the social and political spheres, especially because cultural expression is being used to analyse and make decisions about the community's own concerns.

The third-world theorists do emphasise that the theatre event must be followed up with organisation and action for change; however, they imply that the foundation for this action lies in the theatre event itself, which serves as the arena for analysis of the issues. My focus will be on the shared exploration of the issues that the players engage in while creating the play and that follows the performance during the talk-back session. This discussion may or may not be oriented toward identifying specific goals for change; it may be a discussion in which the community begins to explore the community's relationship to the issues addressed in the play with a view toward eventually identifying particular steps that might lead to change.

Another theorist and practitioner from Britain, Baz Kershaw, argues that theatre can make change by provoking an ideological crisis in its audience through subtle, subversive messages. Although theatre no doubt does this in some instances, probably at the level of the individual spectator, Kershaw fails to demonstrate the probability that theatre can provoke an ideological crisis in a whole audience as a group. An audience as a group can begin to partake, or at least watch others from its own community partake, in questioning and exploring its own situation and possibly some aspects of its ideology. However, this tentative exploration does not amount to the kind of ideological crisis that Kershaw describes.

Finally, some of the work of practitioners such as John McGrath in Scotland and Chris Brookes in Newfoundland implies a commitment to creating change through provocation, by essentially analysing a situation according to a dogmatic ideology and by educating the audience, hoping to stir them to action. This kind of theatre, although effective in some situations, is not the focus of this thesis.

The characteristics that create the dynamic I am describing are summarised on page twelve. Here I will discuss these characteristics in more detail, and what follows are the points in that discussion. The characteristics themselves will be listed at the beginning of the next chapter.

1. Social-Action theatre may be an expression of the community it is created with and for, but more to the point, it is theatre which approaches the issues addressed in the play from an insider's point of view. The community that this kind of theatre serves can take different forms. When the theatre is created with and for a community that shares a group culture, then the theatre is, ideally, an expression of that community. However, one must remember that even in a community that shares a group culture or a common ideology, there will be differences in point of view; or the point of view of the community may be undeveloped, especially with regard to a particular issue. When the theatre is created with and for a more broadly-defined community whose only link may be their shared interest in an issue or condition of life, then the theatre is not an expression of the community but of those who have created the play. It is either an

expression of the creators' first-hand experiences or of experiences they have researched, an expression of a point of view that the audience adds to or responds to but does not overrule. Ideally, the theatre stimulates dialogue and the honest and varied responses of the community to whom the company is playing. Rather than beginning with a set way of interpreting the issues that the play addresses, the play leaves room for the players and the community to arrive at an interpretation of the situation together.

But Social-Action Theatre companies use a wide range of methods to understand the community from an insider's point of view, either having the community members themselves create the play, or researching the play with the community members, or researching the play with professionals who serve the community, or doing traditional research but opening up the play to the audience by incorporating into it contemporary documentary material that is open to the spectators' interpretations. The company's attempt to understand the community and its issues from an insider's point of view tends not only to be reflected in the point of view of the play itself but also in the approach taken to address the community's problems. If the point of view of the play is that of an insider then it helps to ensure that the approach to the problem will reflect the community's emerging understanding of its own situation and interests rather than that of outsiders who may not have as thorough an understanding of the community.

2. During the research and playbuilding processes that involve contact with the community members themselves or with professionals who serve the community, the players may develop a sense of identity with the community that is reflected in the play. The performance may serve to celebrate the community and acknowledge their experiences as important. But there are also barriers to identification, such as preconceptions that the players and community members may have about each other. In the process of trying to overcome these barriers, the players may become more aware of the attitudes and values that distinguish themselves and the community.

3. Understanding these differences may lead to the players creating a play that challenges the audience's subjective understanding of its own situation. This is the case even when the players are from the community because they may, through the process of becoming a theatre company, develop opinions that set them apart from the group. A related point is that the play may attempt to go beyond the official stories and histories that people in the community tell themselves and that might be deeply ingrained in the traditions and conventions of the community.

4. Social-Action Theatre plays may also incorporate outside points of view or views of those with a marginal position within the community.

5. Financial sponsors and groups that sponsor performances of the play may play a large role in deciding which kinds of views are reflected in the play and whether the play incorporates points of view extrinsic to the dialogue between players and audience.

6. In Social-Action Theatre a sense of ensemble may be developed from a shared sense of purpose, from the unifying effect of having to create an original play in a set amount of time, or from the players' shared experiences. Because the play is created collectively from the shared experiences of the performers, the material points back to the people behind the players, not only for the audience but also for the players themselves. Ideally, as the players get to know each other more as individuals, they become closer as a group, a true community in themselves. If the players are creating a play based on their own first-hand experiences, then when they look at each other they are aware of each others' individual stories and how, through the play-building process, these stories have become linked. If they are building the play mostly through research, then the players are aware of each cast member's experiences in researching the play and how all of their experiences

through the play-building process have become linked.

7. Because Social-Action Theatre is an expression by a group of aspects of experience that are shared (either those of the players themselves or of the community that is being researched), it is more open than a personal expression, which is perfect and finished and which no one can add to or comment on. A play which is the result of a shared expression naturally "opens up" to include the voices of those in the audience with similar experiences.

8. Creating an expression that is open to the audience can involve drawing not only from aspects of personal experience that are shared but also from the targeted community's history and contemporary problems and can involve incorporating into the play local slang, dialects, symbols, cultural forms, folklore, popular art forms, and forms from modern popular culture.

9. The theatre builds on the spectators' awareness of their communal ties and strengthens these ties through the process of shared analysis of issues that the play provokes without necessarily reinforcing the existing ideology of the community. Ideally the process for the spectators mirrors that of the players in that they begin to develop a shared point of view, but not at the expense of an awareness of individuality.

10. Another related point is that the players and audience are aware of each other as people rather than

just as people in their role as entertainers and spectators. As already noted, the audience may be aware of the people behind the players because the play reflects their shared experiences. In addition, a special relationship may be created between performers and audience or amongst the audience because of the audience's relationship to a particular venue or to fellow community members who are actors. When participatory research is done with the community during the playbuilding process or when there are other contacts between players and audience outside of the performance itself, the spectators may be more aware of the players as people rather than just as actors. Being on its own turf can make the audience aware of its communal ties, and thus there can be a sense of the community coming together to deal with particular issues and concerns that the play addresses. At the same time, the players are more aware of the spectators as people and as a unique community rather than just as another anonymous audience. This awareness is a precondition for honest and meaningful dialogue between the spectators and players.

11. The audience will more likely be aware of the issues presented in the play as directly relevant to their lives when the Social-Action Theatre event is shaped as a forum for engaging with the issues. In addition, when the community has agreed to the need for theatre and for

dialogue between itself and the theatre company, the play is more likely to be useful to the audience and relevant to its concerns. Either the play is created for a particular audience or the play is created to meet the needs of the players and then brought to communities whose interests coincide with those of the players. But in all cases the event may be more meaningful if there is contact between the players and the audience outside of the performance itself. These contacts with the community can help to ensure that the Social-Action Theatre event is shaped to meet the needs of the community.

12. Although the company strives to meet the needs of the community, ideally the company is aware of its own ideology and is open to the community about the ideology so as not to compromise its own or the community's integrity. Ideally, there is a balance for the company between complete neutrality or simply reflecting the community's views and trying to coerce the community into accepting the company's point of view. Ideally, the company expresses a point of view but also encourages open and honest dialogue between itself and the community.

13. Social-Action Theatre groups structure a play and event in such a way that the audience does not slip into a mode in which the spectators' only expectation is to be passively entertained or stimulated. Social-Action Theatre groups strive instead to create an atmosphere

characterised by informality and directness, in which the spectators can be equal and active participants in engaging with the issues. The use of space and the conventions of performance are non-illusionistic, reduce as much as possible the sense of separation and hierarchy between players and spectators, and encourage participation by the spectators, sometimes during the creation of the play, sometimes in the performance, and always after the performance is over.

14. The gathering of the audience also plays a role in creating a relationship with the audience that is informal and direct. In addition, the method of bringing the audience in to the event ideally focusses attention on the particular nature of the event and gives the audience a personal involvement with the event.

15. The extra contacts between players and audience outside of the performance help dispel any mystique that might usually be attached to the company and promote a more equal relationship between players and community that can encourage participation.

16. The audience will be more likely to participate when the players acknowledge and stress that the expertise on the issues being discussed lies more with, or is shared equally with, the audience. In participatory theatre,

there is a balance maintained between a realistic style and encouraging the detachment necessary to stimulate participation.

Chapter Two: Silent Cries

In this and the next chapter, I will look at two theatre projects in light of the following categories which describe the characteristics that create the dynamic I have identified: (1) creating an atmosphere of informality and directness; (2) shared experience, shared expression, and ensemble; (3) openness of play and event that reflect shared experiences and openness through authentication; (4) spectators' exploration of the issues and awareness of spectators' community; (5) gathering of the spectators; (6) encouraging participation; and (7) agreement between players and spectators.[1] My purpose is in no way to evaluate these two projects; rather, it is to use the projects as a check on my ideas and to adjust the ideas accordingly. The first project, Silent Cries, was developed by the Inner City Youth Development Association (ICYDA) in two versions, first in 1991 and subsequently in 1992/1993. The four performances I attended were all in the spring of 1993. The second project, Under Broken Wings, was developed by Azimuth Theatre, also in two versions, the first in 1988 and the second in 1992. The five performances I attended were all in the fall of 1992. Both plays are about family violence, but Silent Cries is also about the relationship of family violence to drug addiction, and it was created by teenagers from inner-city and other low-income neighbourhoods in Edmonton who have had first-hand experiences with family violence; whereas Under Broken Wings was first created by professional actors who researched the problem by talking to social service professionals and police in Strathcona County and then, in the second version, by three writers who did some of their own research and benefitted from the research done by the original cast.

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[1] I have not included any discussion of ideology, which I explored in Chapter One only to clarify an ambiguity inherent in the goal of meeting the community's needs.

Before proceeding to examine Silent Cries, I will give a very brief introduction to ICYDA, a history and description of the Silent Cries project and play, and some information about the four communities for which the theatre group performed and the context in which they performed.[2]

ICYDA was formed in 1986 by Joe Cloutier. Cloutier, who grew up in the inner city in Toronto, took a drama course while earning his Bachelors of Education at the

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[2] The information in this chapter comes from interviews and from my observation of four performances of Silent Cries. The interviews, all held during 1993, were with Joe Cloutier and Alexina Dalgetty of the Inner City Youth Development Association on August 11, 12, and 17; Marie Bird of the Paul Band Reserve on November 16; Jackie Fiala of the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre on November 23; Dennis Arcand, a contractor with the Yellowhead Tribal Council on November 25; and Bill Moore-Kilgannon of the Centre for International Alternatives, organiser of the Global Visions Festival on November 26. The performances I attended at EYOC, the GV Festival, the PB Reserve, and the YTC Youth Conference were also all in 1993 and were on March 11, 12, 20, and April 2.

University of Alberta and found that it helped him gain confidence and was a good way to explore his emotions safely. He explains that on the street in order to protect yourself and survive, you must keep your emotions hidden. At the time that he was taking the drama course he was volunteering at the McCauley Boys' and Girls' Club in the inner city of Edmonton, and it occurred to him that drama would be a valuable tool for working with inner-city youth and that it would provide them also with a means of exploring pent-up emotions and with a means of creative expression. He then found funding and hired Lorna Thomas as an instructor; at that time Thomas was working with Catalyst Theatre. After the second year of the program at the Boys' and Girls' Club Cloutier began working with teenagers at the Boyle Street Co-operative and at Eastwood Junior High School and, at the same time, began exploring "popular theatre".[3] He met Tony Hall, a "popular theatre" practitioner from Trinidad who at that time was a sessional instructor at the University of Alberta, and Cloutier took a course from him at the University in "popular theatre". Through Lorna Thomas and Tony Hall, Cloutier also met Jan Selman, Jane Heather, and Ruth Smillie, all "popular theatre" practitioners, and often asked for their advice and guidance for the programs he was running and facilitating at the Boyle Street Co-operative and Eastwood Junior High. He was also influenced by the ideas of Paulo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

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[3] Here and throughout this chapter "popular theatre" refers to the kind of Social-Action Theatre that was practised in Edmonton by Catalyst Theatre in the early eighties and to third-world practices in which those with first-hand experiences of the issues to be explored participate in the creation and enactment of a play.

For its programs with children, ICYDA's goals stress using drama as a means of developing the children's self-confidence and as a means of creative expression. For the programs with teenagers, the emphasis shifts to using drama to explore the participants' social reality, to search for constructive responses to difficult social problems, and, finally, to communicate these issues with community members through performances. Alexina Dalgetty, a playwright who had worked with collective creation in both Edmonton and Vancouver, began working with ICYDA's programs as a facilitator in 1989. After she finished her course work for her M.F.A. at the University of Alberta, she joined ICYDA as a co-director in the spring of 1990.

ICYDA operates five programs for teenagers from the inner city and other low-income neighbourhoods. One of these, the Boyle Street program is the only group that regularly performs for audiences. Normally, the youth who participate in the Boyle Street program have already taken part in one of the other four programs (located in the schools and community agencies) and, if they choose to explore issues in more depth, are then asked to join the

Boyle Street program. Boyle Street is located in the Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood in Edmonton in the heart of the inner city.

Silent Cries was created by the Boyle Street group. It grew out of a scene that was created during a popular theatre exercise in which a group of about ten people split into two groups and created improvised scenes for each other. The purpose of the session was not to create a play but to have fun and to unwind at the end of another project.[1] Two of the actors wanted to do a scene in which they were married to each other, and the scene they created was about a wife who, though she has shared some happy, loving moments with her husband, is now being beaten by him. He is addicted to cocaine, which exacerbates and is an integral part of the problem.

This scenario was performed in its original form for ICYDA's parents' night. It was then altered in the summer of 1991 for a series of performances at the Fringe. After these performances it was further developed for two performances in November 1991 for Addictions Awareness Week for Native audiences. The experience of performing for these audiences stimulated the desire in the group to explore the issues of abuse and drug addiction in the context of Native culture.

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[1] The fact that the purpose of the session was to have fun does not indicate that the session was purely frivolous. Often in the process of having fun with drama, the group members will create a scene that deals with a serious aspect of their lives.

At that point the two facilitators, Cloutier and Dalgetty, began searching for funding for such a project. When the funding came through in the fall of 1992 from Alberta Social Services, there were only two members left from the group who had originally developed the play. The new group, which included thirteen teenagers between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, accepted the original scenario and made it their own by creating new characters and situations that were expressions of their own personal experiences.

In addition, the project was now seen by both ICYDA and Alberta Social Services not only as a shared expression based on the players' personal experiences but also as a way of serving the community. Alberta Social Services was looking for a project that would educate the public about family violence and its relation to drug addiction in an innovative way. ICYDA's project was chosen in part because of its potential to help not only the actors but also the audiences that would see the play and perhaps others in the communities where the play was performed.

The play as developed by the group in 1992/93 tells the story of a family in which the father is addicted to cocaine and beats his wife, his teenage son, and his daughter. The story ends when, after his daughter tries to commit suicide, the father realises what he is doing to the family; he promises to go for counseling to stop his abusive behaviour and to get help with his addiction.

The world of the play, which in Social-Action Theatre usually refers to the actual world of the participants or to the world of the community that is being researched, is that of the inner city in Edmonton. In addition, because about eight of the thirteen teenagers involved are Native, the world of the play also refers to Native culture. The Native content (a few scenes with Native dance and one with a Native song) reflected the Native cast members' growing pride in themselves and their culture and served as a way for these cast members to explore their heritage and find strength and healing in it.

I saw four different performances of the play: at the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre (EYOC); at HUB Mall at the University of Alberta as part of the annual Global Visions Festival (GV Festival); for the Paul Band at a school on a Native reserve (PB Reserve); and for a youth conference organised by the Yellowhead Tribal Council at the Coast Terrace Inn (YTC Youth Conference).

EYOC. Jackie Fiala is the Native Program Coordinator at the jail. She and others like her were brought in to the juvenile correctional system after the chiefs in the Alberta Native community expressed concern that so many incarcerated youth were Native and that those youths needed guidance from their own people. Fifty to sixty percent of the inmates at EYOC at any one time are Native.[5] Fiala is Metis. Her grandfather, who followed the traditional ways, influenced her; but most of what she knows about Native spirituality and culture she learned as an adult. She began her career as a teacher and then worked at the Boyle Street Coop as the Education Liaison Worker.

At EYOC, other than counseling the inmates on a one-to-one basis, she conducts several programs for them that are open to both Natives and non-Natives. These include Sweet-Grass ceremonies, Sweat-Lodge ceremonies, Native speakers, a friendship club, a substance-abuse group, drumming, art and crafts, and a group that applies for identification cards for their release. She also maintains contacts with the community, bringing people in as much as possible to find out about the system from the point of view of the inmates, trying to develop the inmates' altruism.

Although the inmates are locked in their rooms only at night and for an hour during the shift change in the middle of the day; and although they are given a range of choices of programs, including an in-house school; the relationships among the youth are nevertheless typical of prisoners. There is a pecking order that is established and maintained through the use of violence and intimidation; and some individuals, like those who have committed sex-assault crimes and those who are weak or look different, are singled out for abuse. The staff on each unit have to watch over more people than they can possibly control, about thirty to a unit. They evaluate the inmates every week using a point system. If they attain a certain number of points, they can move up a level and earn more privileges.

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[5] Fiala, interview, 23 November 1993.

GV Festival. Each year the GV Festival is organised by a committee of the Centre for International Alternatives (formerly the Edmonton Learner Centre), an Edmonton agency that has the goal of educating people so that they will take action for social change and social justice. During the festival, many different means of education are used, including films, live music, food, crafts, dance, and speakers. For the past two years the festival organisers have tried to bring in "popular theatre" as well. There is no organising for social action that occurs at the festival, but each theme that is covered by the festival is programmed by a representative from an agency already active in the area. Most of the people who attend the festival are already actively involved with non-profit organisations. Most are also middle income, although the organisers of the festival are making an effort to bring in people who are unemployed or with lower incomes.

PB Reserve. At the reserve the play was part of a day-long gathering for elders and youth, the focus of which was to improve communication between youth and elders and to provide an opportunity for the elders to tell the youth their general experiences with education and in particular with the residential schools. Although it was not the focus of the gathering, Marie Bird (Director of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse program) says that many of the adults and elders on the reserve were worried about the mostly teenage boys who go in small groups to Edmonton on the weekends. More young and middle-aged adults came to the gathering than were expected, and Bird thought their presence was important because the adults are the missing generation, the ones that are least willing to talk about abuse and get involved. All in the audience would have had some personal experience with the issues depicted in the play. The people on the reserve come from a mixture of tribes and traditions. Some follow the Native ways, and some are Catholic or Protestant.

YTC Youth Conference. Dennis Arcand, a free-lance worker with the Yellowhead Tribal Council, founded and organised the conference in 1990. His father always worked with youth, and after he died Arcand saw himself as inheriting this work. Arcand, whose father was Cree and whose mother is Metis, was not brought up in the traditional ways but now organises conferences for Native youth. He conceived of the idea for the conference and every year must raise his own funds and salary. The theme of the conference was "yougottawanna" and centred on education and career development. It was a national conference, and people were there from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia, and the North West Territories. Those who attended were junior high and senior high school students who were sent by their schools. Arcand thinks that the fact that the students are selected by the schools may mean that the youth who are sent tend to be the students with good grades and school attendance. Other than the students, administrative professionals in social services were also invited, facilitators for the workshops, teachers who came with the students, and finally, volunteers. During the conference there was a career fair, workshops on various issues that affect teenagers, including some that were facilitated by the youth themselves, cultural workshops, entertainment, a public-speaking competition, and an art competition.

Analysis of Project and Performances

1. Creating an Atmosphere of Informality and Directness.

Silent Cries has realistic elements, but the minimalist approach to set and costumes, the performance of a Native dance at the end of the play by the mother, the blues-style rock music and slides projected on the back flats that punctuate the play, and a few farcical bits involving two police detectives, make the overall effect non-illusionistic and help to eliminate the sense of separation between the audience and the actors usually associated with realism. There is just enough dialogue in most scenes to provide the information needed to further the plot. A musician (sometimes two) sits stage right, often like a character, commenting on the action with original songs composed for the play. The actors perform either on floor level or on a low platform, depending on the venue and the size of the audience. The set consists of two overlapping rows of black cloth-covered flats placed upstage, three in the front and two in the back, on a playing space which is mostly bare except for some functional props and furniture. The flats serve throughout the play as a screen for showing slides. There are four chairs, and there is a folding table which represents the family's living room table and also serves as a table in a restaurant and a hospital bed.

The costumes for the play are, for the most part, street clothes, but there are some items used to distinguish the roles of certain characters: the doctor and waitresses wear white, one of the detectives wears a sports jacket, and the other a trench coat. The most striking use of a costume is a poncho-like, colorful cape with bells in the back worn by the mother when she performs her Native dance (the costume was designed and made by the actor who performs the dance). But most of the actors, when setting up before the show, are wearing street clothes, and no make-up is used. The fact that the actors set up the show and that they wear street clothes while doing so also helps to eliminate the sense of separation and hierarchy between players and audience. Lighting is used throughout the play to create focus and atmosphere.

The music in the play is used, sometimes in conjunction with slides, to heighten mood, to increase the illusion, and to comment on the play. Similarly, the Native dancing and accompanying music is sometimes presented realistically and sometimes non-realistically. The play begins with music in a scene without dialogue in which the mother, son, and daughter are looking at slides of the mother's and father's wedding day. During this scene we also see the two musicians stage right and hear the song "Silent Cries". The lights are dim during this song, and the combination of the slides, the presence of the actors, and the music draws us into the world of the play. The song expresses a cry of anguish and a call for help from someone embroiled in the problems of poverty and inner-city life. During the second scene in which the mother is learning Native dance from her friend, she breaks down and cries. While she is sobbing and her friend comforts her, we watch slides of the bride and groom again, this time with white plaster masks over their faces, and we hear a song that heightens the mood but also comments on the action of the scene by expressing the mother's need for her friend. The play ends with slides showing the members of the family looking happier, and with a final song that comments on the play and that suggests a link between the problems that the family goes through and society's ignorance and lack of awareness. Chords from the songs are played through the scene changes and help to build continuity. Some of the scenes are silent, but the chords come up during the scenes where something is going wrong in the family, as when the father is taking drugs or when he threatens or hits the mother or daughter. This incidental music heightens the mood and illusion of the play. There is a recording of traditional Native drumming and singing at three points during the play: twice when the mother is learning Native dance from her friend and a third time when the mother dances alone in costume. The first two times the music is given a realistic source, a boom box on stage. The last time the music comes from off stage, and the dancing is more presentational.

The actual use of space, how it affected the sense of separation between players and performers, and whether the play was illusionistic or non-illusionistic, was determined in large part not just by the fixed aspects of the performance but by the physical conditions of the room in which the Boyle Street group was playing, by the way the space was used, by the behaviour of the audience, and by whether the spectators had had first-hand experiences similar to those depicted in the play. The EYOC performance was in a small rectangular room in the prison with about twenty-two of the teenage inmates. The room was divided in half, with the playing area at one end and the audience and technical equipment at the other (Cloutier and Dalgetty operated the technical equipment from a table in the back of the room). The inmates sat on a carpeted floor, very close together, with two female staff members in the back. About seven of us were sitting on the side stage left against the wall as visitors from ICYDA, which meant that there were two audiences, the inmates and those who were sitting against the wall. However, I will only discuss the dynamic between the inmates and the players.

Because of the intimacy of the space and the small number of people in the audience, the performance at EYOC felt like a meeting between two groups rather than the more traditional relationship of one group attending the performance of the other, in which the audience's main function is to receive the play. Here, there was more of a sense of the players also being at EYOC to "receive" the audience.[6] This effect was heightened because the performance was done on floor level with the audience sitting on the ground and with very little room between the playing area and the audience area. The sense of hierarchy and separation between performers and spectators was almost eliminated. Furthermore, the fact that the spectators' and players' backgrounds were so similar meant that the realistic aspects of the play did not increase the feeling of separation between players and spectators but, on the contrary, helped to bridge the gap. The realism which draws the audience into the world of the play in this case may have made the spectators feel that the world they were being drawn into was very much like their own. Thus, instead of creating a sense of peering into an unfamiliar world, the play instead showed the spectators aspects of their own lives. Overall, the physical closeness, along with the egalitarian relationship and the fixed aspects of the performance, mitigated against an illusionistic effect.

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[6] Throughout this chapter I have attempted to explore the reasons for the mutual nature of the spectators' and players' relationship during the performance at EYOC. These reasons include the similarity of the Boyle Street group's and the EYOC inmates' backgrounds combined with the curiosity generated by their differences; the nature of the space; and the use of the space.

The performance for the GV Festival was in a rectangular room that is also a throughway to other offices in HUB Mall at the University of Alberta. Around the periphery of the room tables had been set up by representatives from various international non-profit agencies and groups with information and goods for sale. At the stage-left side in the audience area, there was also a small inner room with a window where coffee was being sold. The front part of the room, nearest the door that led to the rest of the mall, was the playing area. In front of the playing space about four rows of chairs were set up, each about ten chairs wide. In back of the chairs were some small round tables for cafe-style seating. The technical equipment was set up in the back row of chairs. At the beginning of the performance, there were about eight people in the chairs and four in the tables in the back. About five more came in later. There were also about three people at each of the eight booths around the room.

For this performance, because the room was a throughway, because of the various items for sale around the room that had attracted many of the people who were there, and possibly also because of the cafe-style seating set up in back of the rows of chairs, there was the physical sense of theatre taking place in the context of a larger event, and consequently a sense of separation between the audience and the performers. There was more of a sense of hierarchy between players and audience than for EYOC, partly because of this sense of separation. But ultimately the sense of hierarchy was balanced and perhaps even reversed by the feeling that the adult spectators were reaching out to the teenage cast and trying to understand their situation.[7] In this case, because the spectators were unfamiliar with the world of the play and the situations, the realistic elements may have reinforced the sense of separation.

At the PB Reserve performance, which was in the gymnasium of a small school on the Reserve, there were about forty-five people in the audience, including about twenty youth, five adults, ten elders, and ten small children, all Native. People sat in a semicircle of folding chairs, in some places one row deep and in others, two to three rows deep, about twenty feet from the playing space. During the show the audience was constantly shifting. For example, at one point there was a row of people standing in the back that then disappeared, and for part of the performance there were about four small children playing or drawing in the back that then moved elsewhere. There were many technical difficulties with the performance. The main problem was static in the sound system, which made it very difficult to hear. The actors' voices were not strong enough to fill the room without microphones, and the lighting was also ineffective in many scenes, making it difficult to see. In addition, because the slides were not set up correctly, they had to be adjusted as they were shown. The actors were sometimes confused as to where they were in the play. There was also noise from people talking, babies crying, and children running across the room, both behind and in front of the chairs and playing space. The opening of doors to the outside, bathroom, and coffee room let in the light.

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[7] For a more complete description of this phenomenon, see pages 116-17.

During this performance, partly because of the distance between performers and audience and partly because of the distractions, there was a sense of separation. But despite this sense of separation, the casual attitude and, in some cases, detachment exhibited by the spectators toward the play mitigated against a sense of hierarchy between players and spectators.

The performance for the YTC youth conference was in the ballroom of the Coast Terrace Inn. For the play tables were removed from the centre of the room, and two sections of chairs were set up going halfway down the length of the room, five and seven chairs wide respectively. The seats were almost full by the time the play started, and there were about 150 people in the audience. There were also many people at the sides of the room sitting at the round tables that remained from dinner. The stage was a raised platform, about thirty feet wide in the front centre of the room, taking up about one third of the width of the room. During the show the two musicians at stage right were not in the light, and it was difficult to see the slides clearly because of the distance. Because the performers and audience were on different levels and because of the large size of the audience and room, there was a sense of separation between the players and the audience. There was also a real sense of hierarchy between players and spectators produced in part by the separation between spectators and players that allowed for a sense of mystique to surround the performers.

A study of the Silent Cries project and these four performances reveals some surprises with regard to how Social-Action Theatre can create a theatrical atmosphere that discourages the spectators from slipping into a mode in which their only expectation is to be passively entertained or stimulated, and encourages them to be equal and active participants in engaging with the issues. My assumption was that Social-Action Theatre could create such an atmosphere of informality and directness by dispensing with conventions which were illusionistic or which created a sense of professional mystique around the players. The aim would be to eliminate the sense of separation and hierarchy between players and audience. However, the mixture of illusionistic/realistic and non-illusionistic/non-realistic conventions in Silent Cries shows that a Social-Action Theatre play can retain some of the conventions of realism and an atmosphere of illusion and still encourage the audience to be active and reduce separation. The style of most of the scenes in Silent Cries was realistic; and the lighting, the first song, and the incidental music were used to increase the illusion and draw the audience into the world of the play. These illusionistic techniques seemed to be useful for capturing the audience's attention. The performance at EYOC seemed to indicate that when the world depicted in the play is also the world of the spectators, then using realism does not necessarily increase the distance between audience and players. In fact, it may bring them closer together because the audience may feel that they are being shown aspects of their own lives. Other techniques, such as the use of the slides and two of the other songs, are non-illusionistic and thus may make the audience think more objectively about what they are seeing.

As demonstrated by the performance at the PB Reserve, the audience's behaviour can affect the theatrical atmosphere, making it more informal and either increasing or decreasing the sense of separation between players and spectators, interrupting the sense of illusion, and making the relationship between spectators and players more equal, all despite the intentions of the theatre company.

2. Shared Experiences, Shared Expression, and Ensemble.

The cast members of Silent Cries created their own play based on a scenario created by another group. When the cast members came together eleven of them had been involved with previous projects with ICYDA, and two were in the original version of the play. Consequently, when rehearsals began the cast was already a very cohesive group. The majority of them had been taken through a process designed to give ownership of the group to each of them and to give each of them a voice. The process, as described by Cloutier and Dalgetty, is to have fun, to do games to promote cooperation and trust, to give each person a voice, to pass over ownership to the group, and, finally, to share stories. In addition, as explained by Cloutier and Dalgetty, the Boyle Street group became for the participants more than just a project they were working on; it was for them like a second family and often a primary support group. They were at the ICYDA headquarters, a house (in which a few of them lived) not just for regular scheduled meetings but also for evenings and weekends.[8]

The sense of ensemble in the group was quite profound, being based, first, in the cohesiveness that existed even before the project began; second, in the shared experience of creating the play and finding out about these issues in their own lives; and, third, in a shared sense of purpose in doing the performances. Before the group performed, Cloutier and Dalgetty led a special session in which they asked them why they were performing. Their response, according to Cloutier, was "that they wanted to show people who they were, that they were not stupid, that they were human beings with intelligence, and that the kinds of events depicted in the play do happen and it is o.k. to talk about them."[9]

The focus of the research and playbuilding process for Silent Cries was to recreate the play as a personal expression of the new group. This group wanted to keep the basic scenario of the original version, which was related to them in detail by one of the two group members who were in the first version. But the new group also gradually found ways to make the play their own by creating new characters and situations that were expressions of their own experiences. The research for the play was not focussed so much on finding out about the issues as on finding out what their personal experiences were with regard to the issues. During the play-building process the message of the play was never made explicit; instead, scenes were added because they arose spontaneously, much the way the first version was created, and because they felt right. These scenes were, like those in the original scenario, spontaneous expressions based on first-hand experiences with the issues. Discussions followed the presentation of a new scene, but the discussion would not normally lead to changing the scene. The scene was left intact, but it nevertheless served as a catalyst for the actors' development of their understanding and point of view about these issues as they related to their own and others' lives.

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[8] Interview, 11 August 1993.
[9] Interview, 12 August 1993.

For Silent Cries the audience's awareness of the play as an expression of first-hand experiences and of a moment in developing lives constituted a major aspect of the dynamic of the play. For each performance I attended, the audience was made aware, partly by Cloutier's brief introduction to the play before it began and partly by the talk-back session, that the play had been created from the players' own experiences; and the spectators were also made aware through the talk-back session that the actors had gained insight into their own lives. In fact, this awareness reflects the actors' own experience and attitude toward the play, which for them was an expression of a situation in which many of them were embroiled; and as their story unfolded with the creation of the play, they developed hopes for transcending the situation. The expression itself helped them to see their situation more clearly and to start to work their way out of it, at first through discussion and then through action.

Here I am focussing on the spectators' alertness to the people behind the players, but for the performance at EYOC it is almost impossible to separate this aspect of the dynamic from the players' corresponding alertness to the spectators as a unique community. For many reasons, the players and spectators gave each other their attention, not just in the sense of players who want to please an audience or spectators whose attention is captured because they are being entertained. Rather, the players and spectators demonstrated an alertness to the individuals and communities that lay behind their respective roles of performers and audience. This alertness was especially apparent during the talk-back session, when the two groups facing each other seemed tentative and shy but friendly. The session began when a cast member was curious enough to take the unusual step of asking the audience an impromptu question. She expressed her surprise that they were not wearing uniforms. One of the inmates answered that they were allowed to wear certain kinds of street clothes. Then the cast was asked if they had tried drugs, and they all smiled and nodded their heads and said "yeah". The way this question was asked and answered seemed to establish a tentative familiarity between the groups. The cast was also asked whose story it was, why they did the play, and whether they were paid. Someone answered that they were paid but only six dollars an hour. During the performance itself the audience seemed focussed on the play the whole time; they were not restless despite the long pauses between scenes (the performance at EYOC was the first run-through of the entire play for the cast).

The performance for the GV Festival provides an example where the sense of a mutual encounter was not so strong as at EYOC but where, because of the nature of the material, the audience did seem to look beyond the presentation to the people behind the players. During this performance the audience's awareness of the first-hand relationship between the material and the actors led to a sense of those in the audience reaching out to the cast, which sense was reflected in the performance itself, during the talk-back session, and in the dispersal of the audience after the talk-back session was over. By the first blackout in the play, there was complete silence in the room where just before people had been milling around and talking. This audience did not respond to the play with laughter but with silent attention; there was very little whispering or shifting in seats. The spectators' questions during the talk-back session were sympathetic and respectful but naive. Afterwards, several people in the audience made a point of speaking to the actors.

During the talk-back session, a woman in the back who identified herself as visiting from the United States, (possibly there with one of the organisations that had set up tables in the room to sell crafts and other goods) asked about a humourous scene in the play where the father and the drug dealer are apprehended by two detectives who take out rubber gloves to do a body-cavity search. She was unsure whether the scene was meant to be realistic, whether these kinds of searches actually take place on the street in Edmonton. A cast member answered that it was just put in for humour. The same woman said she was impressed with the play and found it moving. A man who was possibly Hispanic asked whether the events depicted in the play have happened or were presently happening in their families. A cast member answered that they all see these kinds of things happening to others, and sometimes it happens to them too; another cast member said it happened in his family. Cloutier intervened at this point to ask that the cast members not be put on the spot. The man said that his question had been answered and that these kinds of things happen in his country too. A woman at one of the craft tables asked what the significance of the masks was. About midway through the play the same wedding photos that were shown at the beginning are shown with the characters wearing blank white masks. A cast member answered that they wanted to show that the husband and wife have become like faceless monsters. Another cast member clarified that the masks show the characters have lost their smiles. A woman asked what it was like to tell their own true stories; she said if it were she, she would find it depressing. A cast member answered that it helps her because she knows she may be helping people in the audience who have been through the same thing. Another cast member answered that it feels like a weight lifted off your shoulders to share your story and see that people understand. With the exception of the question from the Hispanic man, the questions from the audience seemed to indicate that the spectators were aware of the players' individuality and uniqueness and wanted to understand but were not familiar with the world of the play.

For the performance for the PB Reserve, although many in the audience were familiar with the world of the play or at least some aspects of it, and although there may have been the potential for the same kind of mutual encounter that took place at EYOC, it did not seem to happen, at least not at the level of the group. The main factor that seemed to prevent the spectators from connecting with the people behind the players was the distractions during the performance and talk-back session, which were caused by technical problems and by noises and other distractions coming from the audience.

Despite the fact that the performance was very chaotic, the audience was quick to respond at certain moments in the play. They laughed at some of the jokes but lost others because of the noise. The younger members of the audience laughed at the scenes with swearing and violence. There was also applause after some of the scenes. The quieter sad scenes at the end of the play were not so effective because of the distractions. As a whole, these responses seem to indicate that there was the potential for a mutual encounter between the Boyle Street group and the PB Reserve audience that was not realised and also that, despite the distractions, there may have been some individuals in the audience who connected with the play and the players behind the characters. The talk-back session after the play felt fragmented and awkward. It was very difficult to hear what questions were asked, and there were long pauses between questions. Nevertheless, the fact that there were questions indicates that some connections had been made. Overall, this was the performance where there was the least sense of connection between the spectators and the players behind the characters.

The performance for the YTC Youth Conference was held after dinner for a very large group in a large, impersonal ballroom in the convention rooms of a hotel; the atmosphere was one of a large group at a conference being entertained. They immediately responded with laughter to the jokes, applauded regularly throughout the play between scenes, and gave a standing ovation at the end; but there was often talking during the quieter scenes. Two-thirds of the audience left before the talk-back session. These behaviours seem to indicate that the spectators were not as a group alert to the players behind the characters.

It was difficult to tell from the talk-back session whether the spectators that participated felt any real connection to the teens in the cast. Some of the teens present in the audience may have been familiar with the situations portrayed in the play. A group of young people who stayed and who moved toward the front (it was difficult to hear because of the noise of people moving around) asked many questions indicating curiosity about who is in the group and how they work. Then they asked how the actors managed to play these roles when it is such a sensitive (emotional) area. One cast member answered that because he has seen this kind of thing happen, he just plays from experience. At first it was emotional for him, but after a few performances it no longer was. He also said that being in the play had helped him a lot.

Someone asked if they had to go through counseling to get ideas for stories. Another cast member answered that everyone in the group is very close and can discuss their lives with each other. Another group member whispered in her ear, and she said that being in the group is like being in counseling because you can discuss your problems and get support.

The _Silent Cries_ project provides an example in which the cast had built a sense of community even before the playbuilding process began and thus shows that even when a play is created by a group that already constitutes a community, a Social-Action Theatre project can nevertheless help the group explore the nature of the community with regard to certain issues. The Boyle Street group had not explored as a community their relationship to the issues of drug addiction and family violence. Thus, the play may have helped them simultaneously deepen their bonds and their understanding of their own community.

The performances at EYOC and at the GV Festival seem to indicate that the fact that the spectators are aware of the play as an expression of the players' own experiences can have different implications for the relationship between players and audience depending on the spectators' level of familiarity with those experiences. For example, at EYOC where the spectators had probably had similar experiences to those depicted in the play, the experiences that the spectators and players shared seemed to raise the status of the spectators in the eyes of the performers and perhaps influenced the performers' behaviour toward the spectators. The spectators were in a sense "let in" by the players, who demonstrated an interest in sharing information about themselves and in getting to know the spectators better. In addition, the fact that the spectators were familiar with the world of the play gave them the potential to take an active stance with regard to solving these problems in their own and others' lives. Their familiarity with the problems gave them the insider's expertise necessary to join as equals with the players in attacking the problems. Although the players and spectators did not, in fact, join together to explore their common problems, either during the talk-back session or after the event was over, the potential for this kind of concerted action had a levelling effect on the relationship, making the dynamic more like that of a meeting or mutual encounter between two groups of equal status rather than a hierarchical relationship.

On the other hand, at the GV Festival, because the spectators did not share the experiences of the players and thus were not familiar with the world of the play, their awareness that the stories being presented reflected the first-hand experiences of the players seemed to have a different effect. The spectators' attitude toward the experiences seemed to reflect concern and a desire to understand, and perhaps, together with the fact that the players were teenagers rather than adults, meant that the status of the players was lowered somewhat by the spectators' one-sided demonstration of interest and concern. In a way, this lowering of the players' status is paradoxical because the talk-back session puts the players in the role of experts who hold the knowledge sought by the audience. But the one-sided demonstration of interest and concern tended to put the actors in a passive position of being studied. They had no active role to play other than to answer the questions. One comment made by an actor during the talk-back session that seemed to reflect this more passive relationship was that it feels like a weight lifted off your shoulders to share your story and see that people understand. This comment seemed to be aimed specifically at the situation at the GV Festival where the play was done for those who must make an effort to understand rather than to the kind of situation at EYOC where what the spectators are seeing is much like aspects of their own lives.

Something else that is perhaps peculiar to the kind of "popular theatre" in which the players are from the same broadly-defined community as the spectators (in this case people from the inner city or from other low-income neighbourhoods and in some cases who are Native) is that the performance may have resulted in the emergence of communal ties between the Boyle Street group and individual spectators. Social-Action Theatre may have the potential to forge stronger links between groups that are already loosely associated. Some evidence of this potential was a comment during the talk-back session in which a Native inmate responded to another spectator in the audience who asked what motivated the actors to do the play and whether they were paid. After one of the cast answered that they were paid, but only six dollars per hour, the teenager who was sitting near me mumbled softly that what was important about the _Silent Cries_ project was the message of the play rather than whatever money the players earned. He seemed to be identifying with the actors because he was answering a question that was directed to the actors for them, in a tone of voice and with an expression that seemed to indicate that he was proud of what they were doing and that he could appreciate the values and goals that led to doing the play.

3. _Openness of Play and Event that Reflect Shared Experiences and Openness Through Authentication_.

Silent Cries was created with and for the members of a broadly-defined community of those who have experienced family violence and drug addiction and also, because eight of the thirteen cast members were Native-Canadians, with and for the Native community. The play is a step toward expressing feelings about a particular situation and particular problems from the point of view of those who have daily experiences with the issues.

Looked at in one way, Silent Cries is a series of moments which express shared aspects of the actors' experience of their world. By "experiences" I am referring not just to the situations portrayed but also to the sense of what being in these situations feels like. The scenes in the play reveal the subtleties of the experiences portrayed, but rather than focussing on the particularities of individual experiences they focus almost exclusively on elements that are shared in common. For example, in the first scene of the play we see the father alone in an unguarded moment when he has a chance to use some cocaine unobserved. He comes home and calls out to find if anyone is there. When no one answers he sits down at the table and rather than just immediately taking the cocaine, the actor reveals to the audience by the way in which he bows his head and puts one hand to his face the father's emotional state, perhaps that he is at the end of his rope and feels remorse about his addiction. In another scene, we see the daughter of the family trying to talk to the neighbours who are visiting while in the background we hear the father yelling at, and threatening, the mother. The actors in this scene suggest the daughter's and the neighbours' embarrassment and sadness. The neighbours take the first opportunity to leave and maintain the pretense that they have heard nothing, but we sense the female neighbour's silent support for the mother as she hugs her and tells her she will see her soon while the daughter looks on. When we see the father attack the mother, we are shown not only his aggression but that he is acting out of frustration, that he feels he has lost control of his family. His violent acts are desperate and almost pitiful attempts to regain their respect. Often the attacks occur after his family scorns or criticises him.

Just after the scene in which the neighbours overhear the argument, there is a scene between the mother and the female neighbour in which the female neighbour is teaching the mother a traditional Native dance. During the scene they are only superficially focussed on the dance lesson; and, throughout, there is an underlying dialogue about the friend's desire to help the mother and the mother's desire to get help and comfort from her friend. At one point when the mother is having trouble learning the dance step, the friend asks if there is anything wrong, and the mother answers, "Of course not!" In a scene in which the son is brought home by the police after he has been caught with a knife in his possession while talking to a drug dealer, the mother, far from appearing concerned, acts cynically bored by the whole ordeal, as if nothing could surprise her. Her other actions reveal that she is concerned about her son, but she is so numbed by what she has been through in the past that she habitually shows very little emotion. However, in the scenes in which the husband attacks her we see the intensity of her fear of being hit, both in her face and in her body as she tries to shrink away from him. In a scene towards the end of the play, after the father hits the daughter when she has tried to shield her mother, the daughter takes an overdose of sleeping pills washed down by beer and writes in her diary at the same time. After she is done she silently reads what she has written, and we hear the recorded voice of the actor reading the diary entry. The entry expresses the feeling of being abandoned by everyone and perhaps of powerlessness to help her mother that has led her to attempting suicide. She reads, "Maybe if I die, they will love me again . . . or at least Dad will stop hitting Mum." During this scene and in the last scene of the play, we also see how, for at least some of the cast members, aspects of Native tradition can be a source of comfort and healing: in the suicide scene the actor sings a mourning song, and in the last scene the mother dances alone on the stage in costume. She seems to gain strength and dignity from the dance.

In many ways, Silent Cries reflects not only aspects of the actors' personal experiences that are shared but also aspects of the inner-city world that help to open up the play to anyone familiar with this world. The music that runs throughout the play was written by one of the Boyle Street group members and is in a blues-rock style. The father in the play is addicted to cocaine, which is a very common drug now in the inner city in Edmonton. The family relationships as depicted in the play reflect not only the personal experiences of the players but also relationships and ways of talking to each other that are perhaps typical of families who share these experiences. For example, the father is close to his daughter but hostile or indifferent in his attitude toward his son. The father's attitude toward his children may reflect a situation in which he married the mother after she had already had a son by another man. In response, the son has a cynical and disrespectful attitude toward his father and beats his sister, possibly because he is jealous of her. The father regularly swears at the mother in front of the children. Finally, there are several humourous scenes in the play that gently satirise two police detectives.

I have already discussed how, during the performance at EYOC, the two groups were alert to each other as people and as unique communities. In addition, because their backgrounds were similar, it is probable that the spectators at the jail felt that their own stories could easily serve as an addition to, or a comment on, the particular story that was told in the play. According to Cloutier and Dalgetty, the group at the jail came closest to having a uniform, first-hand knowledge of the kinds of events and issues depicted in the play and of the world of the play. In Cloutier's words, "It is their lives."[10] Because Silent Cries is not a participatory, Forum-style play, the spectators could not literally add in their own points of view, but their awareness of the openness of the play to encompass not only the players' but their own point of view could have laid a solid foundation for some kind of complementary expression on the part of the inmates, either by way of the creation of their own play, or through exploration of their own similar experiences using scene-work or other drama exercises or simply through talking. This kind of exploration and expression did not happen for the community as a group, but it did to some extent on the individual level.[11]

For the GV Festival performance, because the spectators were from a different background from the players, they were unlikely to feel that the play was open to the addition of their own experiences. Some of the individual PB Reserve and YTC Youth Conference spectators might have felt that the play was open to their experiences, but because of the distractions at the reserve and the sense of distance and hierarchy at the conference, it is unlikely that they would have experienced this openness as a group.

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[10] Interview, 17 August 1993.
[11] See pages 131-2.

I have shown, first, that the play does in fact reflect shared experiences from an insider's point of view; second, that the play drew from the community's contemporary problems and used slang, cultural forms, and popular art forms; and third, that there were spectators at three of the four performances who had probably had similar experiences. However, my observations of these performances neither confirm nor deny my assumption that the play was open to the spectators. Mostly due to the nature of the talk-back sessions, there was little conclusive evidence. For example, there was only one instance of a spectator revealing in the talk-back session that he had drawn connections between his own experiences and the scenes in the play: when the Hispanic man in the audience at the GV Festival said that these kinds of things happen in his country too. The only other indication of the openness of the play and event was the difference between the way the spectators reacted to the play at EYOC and at the GV Festival. For both performances, the audiences appeared to give the play all of their attention. But at the GV Festival, it was silent attention, whereas at EYOC, the spectators responded with laughter at the scenes of violence. This response may have been the nervous laughter of recognising aspects of their own lives.

4. Spectators' Exploration of the Issues and Awareness of Community

For the performance at EYOC, the spectators' could not explore the relevance of the issues to their own community because the prison environment mitigated against the prisoners talking sincerely about their feelings and experiences. Fiala says that ideally she would bring a group of inmates to see the play who had already been meeting together for awhile and had at least developed respectful ways of relating to each other. As it was those who were there did not have any special connections to each other as a group except for the fact that they were incarcerated in the same institution. They did, however, have an awareness of who was one of them and who were the outsiders. For example, during the performance about seven visitors from ICYDA, including myself, were sitting on the side against the wall. Having us there was perhaps an event for the inmates; and during the talk-back session, one of them made a point of asking who we were.

Although there was no group exploration of the issues, after the play and talk-back session were over Fiala gave individuals the opportunity to explore the issues presented in the play as they related to their personal lives. She followed up with several of the teens who were violent and who she suspected had a history of abuse. They could talk to her one-on-one in her office. Because of the atmosphere in the jail, when she works with the inmates in groups she cannot expect them to open up because it would make them dangerously vulnerable. But when they are alone with her they can talk about their experiences and feelings and even cry. When she has finished talking to them, she always helps them to regain the composure necessary to survive in the prison environment. If they need to talk to her again, they can fill out a memo asking to see her; she showed me several of these memos. Where the form asks for the reason for the meeting, many of them wrote, "just to talk".

For the EYOC performance, the inmates were in a sense on their own turf, but the relationship between the inmates and the space was complex because they were imprisoned there. Because Fiala booked a small room for the performance, the numbers were limited. She had in the past had ICYDA in for a performance with a much larger audience in the gym, but for this one (because of the issues it raises), she needed to limit the size of the audience so that, if necessary, she could follow up with each of them. Because the room is one that she often uses for her programs, they might have associated the room with her. From what I can tell, Fiala is one of the few if only forces in the jail that would give them any sense of home or community.

For the cast, being at the prison was somewhat of an event. My impression was that for them it was not out of the realm of possibility that they themselves could end up there. I heard a discussion afterwards among some of the cast members about how they would not like it there. One related to the others that she had heard that in the prison girls had to use sugar water for hairspray. And, as mentioned before, during the talk-back session one cast member was curious enough to begin the session by asking the audience about the inmates being allowed to wear street clothes in the jail.

For the GV Festival performance, because the audience probably did not have in common first-hand experiences with the kinds of situations depicted in the play or even with abuse or drug addiction, the play could not serve as a catalyst for their exploring as a group their own connection to the issues. This audience, for the most part, was probably well-informed about the issues depicted but not about the world where the players come from and that they were representing. Most of the people there were young or middle-aged adults who were at the festival presumably because they were interested in international development issues. Thus, although they may have had some knowledge of the events and issues depicted, most would not have had similar first-hand experiences. In Cloutier's and Dalgetty's perception, those who are committed to international development tend to have a global orientation that sometimes excludes having an interest in issues of development at home in Canada. But some of the spectators may have made the connection that the situation in the inner city of Edmonton is typical of what happens to aboriginal peoples around the world.[12]

The spectators were not part of a community, except in the very general sense that they had all demonstrated some involvement with, or interest in, international development by being at the festival. The audience would not have had any special relationship to the space that was used. It was part of a complex of rooms known as the HUB Community Association on the first floor of HUB Mall at the University of Alberta.

Because of the technical difficulties and distractions at the performance for the PB Reserve, the play could not serve as a catalyst for the community to explore its connection with the issues and situations portrayed. It is possible that, as with the performance at EYOC, the play served as a catalyst for individuals to explore their own connections with these issues. According to Marie Bird, there is a fairly substantial gap between the experience of the teens and adults and the elders. Perhaps only the teens who go to the city on weekends would have identified with the particular kinds of experiences portrayed in the play. The elders and some of the adults find the city and their children's and grandchildren's involvement with the city frightening. However, almost everyone there would have recognised and identified with elements of what was portrayed, such as the abusive relationships and the addiction to drugs.

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[12] Interview, 17 August 1993.

There was no further organised activity in connection with the play, but there was a family violence coordinator on the reserve who worked one-on-one with people in crisis, who may have followed up with some of the people who had seen the play. The school gym where the performance was held is the main meeting hall for the reserve.

It is more than likely that the actors in the Boyle Street group were very aware of their audience as a unique community, partly because they were setting up for the play and packing to go in the midst of the activities that were taking place as part of the youth gathering. Just before the performance, young people went up to a microphone and shared personal stories about their lives. Then the participants broke into small groups for discussion. After the performance the youth met on the stage for traditional drumming and singing.

The group at the YTC Youth Conference had to a certain extent become a community in the course of the conference, and many of them did share similar backgrounds, but there was no evidence that the performance served as a catalyst for the group as a whole to explore the issues which are presented in the play. Much of the audience did not stay for the talk-back session, and of those that did stay, only a few could participate because the noise of people dispersing made it difficult to hear. The audience had no special relationship to the hotel ballroom used for the performance other than that which had been developed during the conference itself.

For none of the four performances did the audience engage in a shared exploration of the issues presented in the play as these issues pertained to their own community, and for none is it clear why no exploration was generated. However, at the PB Reserve performance the technical difficulties seemed to have prevented the audience from engaging fully with the play, and consequently there was little basis for the whole community using the play as a foundation for their own exploration. The audience at the YTC Youth Conference was given little preparation for the event and seemed to treat it mostly as educational entertainment.[13] The audience at the GV Festival had had no first-hand experiences with the issues and consequently could not engage in a shared exploration of these issues. Finally, the experience at EYOC seems to demonstrate that people must trust each other and feel safe if the community is to engage in a shared exploration of the issues. Thus, if Social-Action Theatre is to stimulate the community to engage in a shared exploration of the issues as they relate to their own community, then ideally it is brought to groups that already have developed a strong sense of community and with that a feeling of trust and safety.

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[13] See next section on gathering.

5. Gathering of the Spectators.

For the EYOC performance, Fiala had personally gone to the different units in the prison and invited or told the inmates that she thought would benefit to come to the performance and then led them to the small room where the performance was held. Some of them had chosen to be there, and some were told to go. The inmates' connection to Fiala may have alerted them to the notion that the play could be important to them.

For the GV Festival performance, the play was listed in the program, but most of the people who saw it came to the HUB Community Association space because of the tables that had been set up there with crafts for sale from different international organisations and because of the beverages that were on sale. Also, the people who were manning the tables were there primarily for that reason, not to see the play. Bill Moore-Kilgannon says that he purposely put the play in a high-traffic location because the films tend to be a bigger draw and he wanted to get an audience for the play. Even though this audience was not given much introduction to the nature of the event, they probably understood at least somewhat the particular nature of the theatre event because they were attending a festival in which films and other media were being used to make them aware of social and political issues.

For the performance at the Paul Band Reserve posters were put up around the reserve to advertise the youth gathering and the play, but no other information was given to the participants. It is unclear whether the participants would have understood the particular nature of the theatre event or felt any personal connection to the event.

The performance for the YTC youth conference was in the ballroom of the Coast Terrace Inn about one hour after a meal in the same room. Most had left the room after dinner, which was accompanied by the giving of awards; and then they gradually came back in for the play. Those who were at the conference would have learned about the play simply from a listing on the agenda. It is unclear whether they would have understood the particular nature of the theatre event or felt any personal connection to the event.

The examples of the performances at EYOC, the GV Festival, and the YTC Youth Conference seem to confirm that the gathering of an audience can influence the spectators' response to a Social-Action Theatre event. However, we can see that the concept of "gathering" is insufficient to describe the particular influences at work in these examples. It was not just because of the manner in which the audiences were brought in to the event, but also because of the context in which they saw the play, that the audiences at EYOC and at the GV Festival seem to have understood enough about the nature of the events that they gave the play serious attention and participated afterwards for the talk-back sessions. For the EYOC performance, there was coercion involved; but, as I have described, the spectators were very alert throughout the performance and did not seem to be passively complying with an order. The gathering and the context or the "framing" of the event are separate concepts which are sometimes traceable to the same source and sometimes to mostly distinct sources. Thus, for the EYOC performance Fiala was responsible for bringing the spectators in to the event and for giving them any information about the event; and because the inmates' relationship with Fiala was one of the few, if only, of their relationships that is nurturing rather than punitive and in which they are encouraged to take an active role in their own development, Fiala's association with the event may have given it a context which encouraged them to take an active stance. For the GV Festival performance, the gathering for the event was haphazard, but the framing of the event seemed to help encourage an active relationship between the spectators and the players.[14] On the other hand, for the YTC Youth Conference, the response to the play seemed to indicate that because of the framing of the event the majority of the audience saw Silent Cries as an entertaining play with a message, which was put on the agenda of the conference after dinner for their enjoyment and possible edification rather than as something with which they were expected seriously, thoughtfully, and actively to engage; and only a small part of the audience took part in the talk-back session. The case of the Paul Band Reserve is ambiguous because of the technical problems with the play that interfered with the audience's engagement with both the performance and the talk-back session.

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[14] The framing of the event consisted of the fact that it was part of a festival designed to encourage the participants to take an active stance with regard to international development issues.

6. Encouraging Participation.

The aspect of the *Silent Cries* project that encourages participation is the talk-back session that is held after every performance. The actors come out after the last scene in the play, accept their applause, and sit down in a row. One of them holds a microphone and asks if there are any questions. When a question is asked, whoever feels comfortable answering the question does so. For these four performances the participation engendered by the talk-back session tended to put the players in the role of experts who hold the knowledge that is sought by the audience; and with the exception of the EYOC performance, there was no two-way dialogue. However, sometimes after the talk-back session was over there were informal exchanges between the players and individuals and small groups that allowed for more equal participation by the spectators.

Based on the very different experiences of the talk-back sessions at EYOC and the GV Festival, one might conclude that when the actors create a play about their own first-hand experiences, it puts them in the role of experts. However, their status is affected differently depending on the audience's own familiarity with the issues depicted. Thus at the GV Festival, where the world of the play was unfamiliar to the audience, the audience relied on the expertise of the actors; and as a result, the talk-back session was somewhat like an interview, with the spectators gathering information from the players. However, at EYOC the players' expertise was balanced by the comparable expertise of the spectators with regard to the world and problems depicted, and thus the talk-back session could be more of a two-way dialogue in which the participating sides were equal.[15]

7. Agreement Between Players and Spectators.

ICYDA's production of Silent Cries did not come out of a process of identifying a need for theatre about a particular issue and then creating a play; it was born out of the spontaneous, creative expression of a small group of inner-city teenagers. Thus, it was created to meet the needs of the players, with the idea of then bringing it to communities who shared the players' concerns and interests.

In the case of EYOC, extra contacts outside of the performance itself between ICYDA and the sponsoring organisations seemed to help to ensure that the performance event was shaped to meet the needs of the spectators' community. Fiala's long-standing relationship with ICYDA and her appreciation and understanding of the group and its goals helped her to maximise the usefulness and relevance of the event for the inmates and allowed her to envision the potential power of the event in their lives. Fiala had had a long association with Cloutier and with ICYDA and now serves on the advisory board. When she was working at the Boyle Street Co-operative in 1986, Cloutier expressed an interest in starting a program for the teenagers there in which they would use drama to develop their confidence and social skills, to express themselves, and to work towards change in their own lives and in the lives of others in the community who are like them. Fiala was interested right away and not only helped set up the program but participated as a facilitator because she strongly believed in programs that empower youth by giving them most of the control in determining direction and goals. In her words, "you walk with the participants to where they want to go."[16]

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[15] For further comments on the relative status of spectators and audience at these two performances, see pages 121-2.

At EYOC Fiala works with youth that are from the same background as those she worked with in the inner city; they come from the same neighbourhoods, and they have the same concerns and problems. She has twice brought in ICYDA's plays to show her clients that Native teens can do things that are positive; she says that her youth have very poor self-esteem and poor self-images as Native people. For the other inmates who are not Native, seeing the play may change their own image of Natives and begin to combat racism.

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[16] Interview, 23 November 1993.

Fiala used the play as a way of broaching the subject of some of the individual inmate's experiences with violence and drug addiction in their own families. In effect, she was taking advantage of a process that she presumed had begun in the performance itself, a process in which the spectators recognised the experiences portrayed in the play as being similar to those in their own lives. The play could thus be used as a starting point for identifying and describing some of their own experiences. Perhaps it allowed them to see these experiences a little more objectively and thus to understand the experiences better. Because of the play, they had also seen teenagers from backgrounds similar to their own portraying situations which they may have, until then, considered inappropriate to talk about. Thus, a process may have begun in the performance in which they began to realise that it is acceptable to discuss openly such experiences.

In the case of the GV Festival, except in a very general sense, there was no intention on the part of the organisers to use the play as a way of exploring the audience's issues. As a result, extra contacts between the organisers of the festival and ICYDA were not relevant to meeting the organisation's explicitly acknowledged purposes for the play. ICYDA's play was brought in to promote the idea of "popular theatre" and as one way of highlighting local issues and their link to international issues. Furthermore, as already pointed out, the spectators for the play were not part of a community.

For the PB Reserve, there was no deliberate effort to link the play to the rest of the day's activities for the youth gathering, which was about the role of education in the lives of the youth; consequently, as with the performance at the GV Festival, extra contacts between the organisers of the festival and ICYDA were once again not relevant to meeting the community's explicitly acknowledged purposes for the play. The play was included because the organisers wanted to provide some entertainment that would also build awareness. In addition, the organisers knew that the play was created by inner-city youth and was about the urban scene. Thus, in part the play was brought in because of the adults' and elders' concern with the youth who visit the city on the weekends and perhaps engage in activities that they would disapprove of or find frightening.

Similarly, with the YTC Youth Conference there was no attempt to link the play with other activities that took place during the conference. Dennis Arcand brought another one of ICYDA's plays to the first conference he organised. The play was brought in for this second conference because Arcand thought it would be good to see Native youth from the inner city involved in theatre and sending out a positive message. He also thought it was important to support ICYDA in its efforts to help Native youth.

For all four performances the explicitly acknowledged reasons for bringing in the play seemed to anticipate using the play as a product: as entertainment, as a means of building awareness, to provide positive role models, and to promote "popular theatre". But the way that the play was actually used for the EYOC performance included not just these kinds of purposes but also trying to link the play to an ongoing process of analysis and action for change. Perhaps when the play is used only as a product, then the theatre company can meet the needs of the community without any previous contacts between them. However, perhaps when, as in the case of EYOC, the community or a leader from the community has either stated or unstated purposes for building on the process begun with the performance, then extra contacts between the theatre company and the community can encourage the community to take more control over the event and make it relevant to the concerns and needs of the community that are related to the subject of the play.

Conclusions

From my study and observations of the Silent Cries project, I have drawn the following conclusions:

1. When the world depicted in the play is also the world of the spectators, then the realistic elements of the play will not necessarily increase the distance between audience and spectators. The realistic elements may capture their attention and draw the spectators into the world of the play, in effect reducing the sense of separation between players and audience because the audience may feel that the world they are being drawn into is really their own or at least very similar to their own. Non-illusionistic techniques can be used in conjunction with realism and may make the audience more active by encouraging them to think objectively about what they are being shown.

2. When the players have created a play about their own first-hand experiences, then their role in the talk-back session may be like that of experts who hold the knowledge sought by the spectators.

3. The collective-creation process of Social-Action Theatre may help an already established community explore the nature of the community with regard to particular issues, possibly also helping to strengthen the bonds of the community.

4. The spectators' awareness of the play as an expression of the players' own experiences can have different implications for the relationship between players and audience depending on the spectators' level of familiarity with those experiences. When the spectators are familiar with the world of the play, this familiarity can have a levelling effect on the relationship between players and audience. During the talk-back session and perhaps also during the performance at EYOC, the experiences that the players and spectators shared seemed to raise the status of the spectators in the eyes of the performers and may have influenced the performers' behaviour toward the spectators. The spectators were in a sense "let in" by the players, who demonstrated an interest in sharing information about themselves and getting to know the spectators better. The spectators' familiarity with the problems depicted in the play gave them the insider's expertise necessary to join as equals with the players in attacking the problems. Even the potential for concerted action on the part of the players and spectators had a levelling effect, making the dynamic more like that of a meeting or mutual encounter between two groups of equal status rather than a hierarchical relationship.

When the spectators are unfamiliar with the world of the play, there will be a different effect on the relationship between players and audience. In the example of the GV Festival performance, what seemed to happen was that the spectators' one-sided demonstration of interest and concern lowered the status of the players because it put them in the passive position of being studied, a position in which their only function was to answer questions.

5. Social-Action Theatre may have the potential to forge links between groups that are already loosely associated when the spectators and players share similar backgrounds. This community-building potential is suggested by a comment by a spectator at the EYOC performance that indicated that the spectator was identifying with the players, their values, and their goals for the project.

6. If Social-Action Theatre is to stimulate the community to engage in a shared exploration of the issues as they relate to their own community, then ideally the theatre is brought to groups that already have developed a strong sense of community and with that a feeling of trust and safety.

7. Extra contacts between the theatre group and the community are probably not necessary to serve the needs of the community when the community anticipates using the play only as a product; for example, as entertainment, as a means of building awareness, or of providing positive

role models. But extra contacts may encourage the community or a leader from the community to take more control of the event for the purpose of building on the process that begins during the performance. As a result, the spectators may be more aware of the issues raised by the play as directly relevant to their lives.

Chapter Three: Under Broken Wings

Before examining Azimuth Theatre's Under Broken Wings I will give a very brief introduction to Azimuth Theatre, a history and description of the Under Broken Wings project and play, and some information about the five audiences for which the group performed and the context in which it performed.[1]

In the case of Azimuth, the beginnings of the project predate the founding of the theatre company. In its first version Under Broken Wings was developed in response to a perceived need in Strathcona County to educate the community about family violence. It was developed and seemed to be effective where other more traditional methods had failed. The show was then revived after the founding of Azimuth when the results of a survey conducted in Edmonton and in Strathcona County showed that family violence was still a major concern. The first version was created collectively, and the play was rewritten by a team of writers for the second version. In 1987 Strathcona County Family and Community Support Services and several other agencies sponsored a Speaker's Bureau and film night in Sherwood Park for Family Violence Prevention Month. According to Hurford-Simcoe, it was a failure, possibly because it was too dry and conventional an approach to attract much interest.[2] At this time Hurford-Simcoe was working for the Strathcona County RCMP in Sherwood Park as their Crime Prevention/Community Relations Officer. She held this community education position from 1986 to January 1993, a period of time which overlaps with the founding of Azimuth in 1991. She had used drama before as an educational tool in 1987 for Echo Mortal, a play about impaired driving and in 1988 for A Shade of Rain, about teen suicide. All of these plays were collective creations which used young actors. In 1988, the same coalition of agencies that had sponsored the original speaker's bureau decided to sponsor another one but this time in conjunction with a play on family violence that Hurford-Simcoe would develop as part of her job with the RCMP, using the same collective-creation technique she had used in the past for her other RCMP projects. The actors who created and acted in the play were Paul Austin, Darren Boisvert, Margaret Carmichael, Susan Huff, Binaifer Kapadia, Robert Larmont, Brian Marler, Darcy Modin, John Rusich, and Michelle Patsula.

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[1] My information about Azimuth and the Under Broken Wings project is based on interviews and observation of performances. The interviews were all in 1993 and were with Deborah Hurford-Simcoe, the Executive Director of Azimuth and the director and facilitator of the play, on August 18; Al Spady, the counselor at the Bruderheim School, on November 29; Bob Marvin, social worker at Edmonton Community and Family Services, on November 18; Bob Williams, officer of the Sherwood Park Kinsmen Club, on November 17; Steve Carter, former counselor at Clover Bar Junior High School in Sherwood Park, on November 24; and Hilda McLellan and Patti Clancy-Novosel, teachers at Holy Trinity High School, on October 22. The performances I saw were all in 1992 and were at the Bruderheim School, the John D. Bracco School in Edmonton (Clareview), Salisbury Composite High School in Sherwood Park, the M.E. LaZerte School in Northeast Edmonton, and Holy Trinity High School in Edmonton. The dates of the performances were November 12 (afternoon), November 12 (evening), November 13, November 16, and December 4.

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[2] Interview, 18 August 1993.

Sometime late in 1990 Hurford-Simcoe began organising Azimuth Theatre Association as an entity separate from the RCMP, which now had an inspector who was unsympathetic to using theatre for educational purposes. Azimuth was officially founded July 22, 1991. Its goal as an organisation is to create "research-based performance art which examines critical issues and empowers individuals, institutions and communities to initiate positive change."[3]

In its second version, Under Broken Wings was taken on tour throughout Alberta to thirty-one communities with a total of 44 performances between October and December, 1992. The actors in the cast were Tim Dixon, Joe Bird, Yves Mercier, Yoshiko Shimizu, and Maureen Smith. The majority of performances were held in conjunction with the provincial Family Violence Prevention Campaign, which included designating November 1992 as Family Violence Prevention Awareness Month. All of the performances were either held in the evenings for the community at large or during the day for school audiences. I saw five of these performances: one in Bruderheim, at the Bruderheim

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[3] Azimuth promotional material, 1993.

School, sponsored by Family and Community Support Services; one in Sherwood Park at Salisbury Composite High School, sponsored by the Kinsman Club; and three in Edmonton, one at the John D. Bracco School, one at M.E. LaZerte High School, both sponsored by Edmonton Community and Family Services, and one at Holy Trinity High School, sponsored by the school itself. The two at the Bracco and LaZerte schools in Edmonton and the one in Sherwood Park were community performances held in the evening in high schools, and the other two were during the day for the Bruderheim and Holy Trinity school audiences, although there were also some high school students from Lanmont and some community members present for the Bruderheim performance.

Bruderheim. Most of the people living in Bruderheim are either unemployed or they work in Edmonton or at the large industrial plants nearby in Fort Saskatchewan. Only about twenty-five of the families of the students at the Bruderheim school live on farms in the surrounding area. As a community Bruderheim tends to attract many transient families because it is relatively close to Edmonton and has a lot of inexpensive housing available. Al Spady, the guidance counselor at the Bruderheim School, knows that at least four or five students in each classroom of about twenty-five or thirty have had personal experiences with family violence.

The school has a peer-support program in which ten or twelve of the grade eight and nine students were participating the year of the performance. They were present in the audience. The peer support group plans forums for the other students on various issues. They also adopt classrooms in the grades K through 7, and the younger children seek them out when they have a problem.

Salisbury Composite High School in Sherwood Park. The play was sponsored by the Sherwood Park chapter of the Kinsman Club. The Kinsmen Club has a District Service Project in Alberta called the Shining Light Child Abuse Prevention Program. It is an awareness program, and each club has the option of participating by sponsoring an event or making a donation. Last year the club decided to sponsor the play after Hurford-Simcoe made a presentation to them. The audience at the play consisted of a group of about twenty adolescent peer counselors from Clover Bar Junior High School and the school counselor Steve Carter who were invited by Hurford-Simcoe, about five Kinsmen members, and families who came because they saw the posters for the play. Clover Bar Junior High School is in Sherwood Park, where many of the students come from wealthy families. Steve Carter, the former school counselor at Clover Bar, says some of the problems associated with coming from a wealthy family are having both parents work and out of the home a lot and also the pressure of being expected to excel at school and go to university.

At the time Carter was running the peer counseling program at Clover Bar, it was open to any student who demonstrated commitment and an ability to work in groups. In the year of the performance at Salisbury Composite, about forty-five to fifty students were chosen for peer counseling, and there were 425 students at the school; consequently, one out of every eight students was a peer counselor. Carter says this relatively low peer-counselor-to-student ratio was important because a student will not confide in another student just because he or she is a peer counselor but only if he or she is a friend. Once the students are chosen, they receive training in communication skills, active listening, problem solving, and crisis intervention. Most of the problems with which the students come to the peer counselors involve relationships, either at school or at home.

The peer counselors have weekly meetings, with a different training topic each week, including such issues as teen suicide and alcoholism. During November, which was Family Violence Prevention Month, they focussed on family violence issues. They also had speakers from Alateen, a group for teens with alcoholic parents, and subsequently started an Alateen self-help group at Clover

Bar; and they had a seminar on date rape that was open to anyone in the school.

Because the peer counseling group was large it was not close-knit, but through their training and meetings and through the example of the students who had returned for a second or third year as peer counselors, they developed a group dynamic in which everyone felt comfortable giving their opinion or talking openly about anything that was on their minds.

John D. Bracco and M. E. Lazerte High Schools in Northeast Edmonton. The play was brought to these two spaces in the evening by Edmonton Community and Family Services (CFS), an organisation funded since 1966 under the Family and Community Support Services Act to do preventative social service programming. Eighty percent of the funding comes from the provincial government and twenty percent from Edmonton, and there are nine CFS centres in Edmonton. The Northeast Edmonton centre located in Clareview that sponsored the performances serves an area in which family violence is very prevalent. The area has a population that includes many new immigrants, Natives, blue-collar workers, and low-income families. The local welfare office serves the highest number of single-parent families in the city.

The centre has been offering support, information, and help to victims of abuse for the last ten years.

Their activities and programs in this area include information and referral, an abused women's support group, and two Family Violence Response Teams, each consisting of a social worker and detective. The centre also has a history of using theatre and video on three occasions as a means of promoting discussion about issues. Each time, small groups of clients did collective creations based on their own experiences.

Analysis of Project and Performances

1. Creating an Atmosphere of Informality and Directness.

Some of the scenes in the play use a realistic acting style, but because the play is episodic and changes from one style to another and because it is punctuated throughout with music and uses only minimal set pieces and props, the overall effect of the play is non-illusionistic. These aspects of the play also help to reduce the sense of separation between performers and audience by creating a style that is conducive to a theatrical atmosphere characterised by informality and directness. The play consists of a series of vignettes tied together by two characters, a professor and a boy scout, who are on a safari, on the trail of "abuse". In their scenes, which are humourous, they speak directly to the audience and to other characters that interact with them within the context of their scenes but not to, or about, the characters in the other scenes. Their hunt parallels our viewing of the play and discovery of the different forms that abuse can take. In their first scene they warn the spectators that there are people who will say that abuse is not real, and they tell the audience not to listen to these people. They appear three more times throughout the play and once at the very end. In their subsequent appearances they teach the audience with the help of other characters how to handle a disclosure, what the signs are that could mean someone is a victim of abuse, and that the victims are from all classes. At the end they corner and trap "abuse", but it escapes into uncharted territory. The professor is abject, but the boy scout points out that they now know how to fight it. This scene leads into the ending in which the audience is asked to join in the fight, and the whole cast comes out to sing the upbeat song, "Make Change". The play also underscores the theme that all people are potential victims and abusers with a mock television series called "Keeping Up With the Joneses". In each of the four "episodes", someone in the family experiences abuse, and the role of abuser also shifts. All of the "Keeping Up With the Joneses" scenes are done in an exaggerated situation comedy style, complete with fake applause and laughter.

Most of the other scenes in the play are done in a realistic style, but a scene with an Italian-Canadian and

Franco-Canadian construction worker is broadly comic and uses stereotyped characters; in another scene, a mentally handicapped boy speaks directly to the audience; and finally, a scene with two Native children being driven to safety by their Mother is expressionistic. It uses drums throughout to express the children's fear, and the children speak their thoughts aloud, sometimes taking turns and sometimes in unison.

The play is punctuated throughout by music in an early seventies pop style. The opening song, "Under Broken Wings" sets the emotional and thematic meaning of the play. Similarly, the next song in the play, "My Little Princess", which precedes a scene about a teenage girl who is being abused by her uncle, is a very brief sentimental piece which opens the audience up for the touching scene to come. The last songs are less sentimental and serve as a commentary on the action; these are "I Don't Recall How Long It's Been Going On", which introduces a two-part scene about a battered wife and her friend; "I Want to Be Part of the Solution", which comes before the last scene in the play in which a mother talks to her teenage son about his treatment of his girlfriend; and finally the closing song, "Make Change". Thus, the first two songs pull the audience into the world of the play; the second two shift the emphasis toward getting the audience to think objectively about the action; and the last song shifts the action of the play to the audience. During the play the band is always visible, and at one point, the music director, who composed and plays most of the music and sings, interacts with one of the actors. Throughout the play Hurford-Simcoe sings in the band, and at the end all of the actors join in to play and sing the closing song. Also, before the play starts and as the audience members file in and take their seats, all of the cast members take turns singing didactic songs about abuse. They sing with the band as if their purpose were to provide entertainment while the audience is waiting for the play to start. Because the singers are the same as the actors who appear in the play, this element of the performance helps make the play non-illusionistic and, although the singers do not speak directly to the audience while they are on stage, decreases somewhat the sense of separation between actors and audience.

The only set pieces are colored cubes which the actors use as chairs, and there is only minimal and symbolic use of props. Most objects are simply mimed. The costumes are symbolic pieces that are added to a basic costume that they all wear of dark pants and tee-shirts. For example, for the "Keeping Up With the Joneses" series, the actor playing the little girl wears a huge bow in her hair. Masks are used for one of the scenes with the professor and boy scout. Depending on the venue, the actors change costumes in view of the audience.

In all of the performances I saw, the amount of separation between players and audience varied, but there always seemed to be a sense of hierarchy between players and spectators, perhaps due partly to the fact that the players are professional actors and are introduced in the program as such with their work history, and possibly also to the fact that the play is didactic in nature. This sense of hierarchy is reinforced by the talk-back session, during which two of the people from the cast would sit on the panel. The cast members would introduce themselves by saying they were not experts in the area of family violence but that they had participated in an in-service training session. Just the fact that they were on the panel and were expected to answer questions tended to give them authority. Also, Hurford-Simcoe, who performs in the play as a singer, facilitated the talk-back sessions; as a result, she was also set up as an authority of sorts.

The actual use of space and how it affected the sense of separation between players and performers was determined in large part not just by the fixed aspects of the performance but by the physical conditions of the room in which the group was playing and by the behaviour of the audience. The use of space for the Bruderheim performance perfectly complemented the fixed aspects of the performance that made the play non-illusionistic and that reduced the feeling of separation between players and audience. The performance was held in a small gym. About one hundred of the junior high school students were sitting on mats on three sides of the playing area to form a floor-level thrust "stage". The actual elevated stage on one side of the gym was not used. High School students from Lanmont sat on a row of benches behind the mats that faced onto the front of the playing space, and teachers and members of the community were sitting in a row of chairs behind these benches and also on chairs behind the mats on the two sides. As the students entered the gym the band played, and the performers sang didactic folk-rock and blues-style songs. The students already seated on the mats were talking. It felt like a concert, and the music created a feeling of anticipation for the play to come. One student in the audience said to no one in particular, "This is just like Woodstock, Man." The students turned around and watched whenever people came in. Once the play started, because the actors were on floor level and very close to the students on the mats and because the students surrounded the playing space on three sides, it felt very much like the kind of street theatre in which the performers are there to make the audience laugh. However, despite the sense of intimacy, the age difference between the players and spectators combined with the fixed factors already cited contributed to the sense of hierarchy.

The second performance I attended was at the John D. Bracco High School in Edmonton for an audience of professionals and some families possibly from the Clareview community. There were about sixty people there at the beginning of the play. The performance was in a large, bright, modern atrium at the entrance to the school, and the lights were up for the entire performance. Within the atrium there was a small, elevated proscenium stage that was used, and the use of this playing space took away somewhat from the non-illusionistic effect because the entrances and exits and costume changes were hidden from view. The actors played in front of a dark green curtain, which, since many of their costumes were dark, diminished the actors' presence on stage. In general, because there were few props and set pieces, the only focus was the actors; consequently, when that focus was gone, there was not much left to grab the audience's attention. The atrium was an open area with many people passing through. On either side of the narrow stage there were halls going back into other areas of the building. In the back, facing the stage at the level of the second floor, was a balcony. Some teenagers were watching the play from there. People in the audience could leave easily if they wanted to, and many did. Thus, for this performance, the elevated proscenium stage, the dark curtain in the fully lit atrium, which obscured the presence of the actors, together with the small size of the stage relative to the large atrium, and the people leaving and passing through all contributed to a sense of separation between actors and audience.

The third performance I attended was in Sherwood Park at Salisbury Composite High School. Because the house was dark during the play and because the audience was only on one side of the stage, there was more of a sense of separation between players and audience than for the Bruderheim performance; but because the theatre was small there was still an intimate effect. The theatre had three seating sections. The middle section was about half full with about sixty people. The first three rows of seats were filled with adolescents who were there as a group and were all peer counselors at their school. The stage was gently raked and had a deep apron in front of a dark curtain. This time the stage lighting was used for the performance; consequently, the dark curtain did not interfere with the visual impact of the actors, and the lights helped to focus the audience's attention. Having the large group of peer counselors in the audience helped to dispel some of the sense of hierarchy. As evidence of the peer counselors' status, some of the spectators sought information during the talk-back session from the peer counselors rather than from the panel of experts.

The fourth performance I attended was in Edmonton at the M. E. LaZerte High School in a large lecture hall with fluorescent lights. The playing space was slightly elevated and shaped like an upside down T; there were dark curtains in the rear of the stage; and there were about 100 people in the hall. Here the size of the hall meant that the 100 people were spread out amongst 300 seats and relatively far away from the stage. Despite the lack of physical intimacy amongst the spectators and between the audience and the playing space, the fact that the lights were up throughout the performance helped decrease the feeling of separation between players and audience.

For the performance at Holy Trinity High School, there was a very pronounced sense of separation between audience and players, mostly because of the huge space together with the fact that the play itself is scaled to be most effective in intimate spaces. About 800 people attended. The high school is in a new building with a large, bright gym. The chairs were set up on three sides of the playing space, and people also sat on the risers against the wall in the back. Many of the scenes lost their power because of the large space and the looming risers in the back, which destroyed any sense of the players being united with the audience. Furthermore, most of the scenes were not scaled to such a large space but were quiet and demanded a more intimate focus. Finally, there were several television cameras present, and at one point during the play and for most of the talk-back session, there was a cameraman right on the playing space. The presence of the cameras did not necessarily interfere with the role of the performance in generating discussion, but it took it away from the people in the audience and the players and made it into an event for the media, something that the media could comment on both visually and orally.

Just as I noted with respect to Silent Cries that some illusionistic techniques can actually aid in reducing the separation between players and audience and in thus creating an atmosphere of informality and directness, so also with Under Broken Wings the use of realistic scenes and music that is used to increase the illusion helps draw the audience into the world of the play. When the spectators have had similar experiences to those depicted in the play, in the sense not just of living through similar situations but also of having similar feelings in those situations, then the use of realism may actually decrease the sense of separation between audience and spectators.

2. Shared Experience, Shared Expression, And Ensemble.

Whereas the actors for neither version of the play shared as a group first-hand experiences with abuse, the actors for the first version of the play could nevertheless claim that the play reflected their group experience of researching the play and attaining understanding and insights about the issues involved. Thus, for the first version the play did point to the people behind the players. This claim is less true for the second version of the play. The actors for both versions were chosen primarily for artistic ability, professionalism, and communication skills, and for the second version, to fit a collage of roles rather than for the fact that they had any particular interest or experience with family violence issues. Although Hurford-Simcoe believes that everyone has at some level at some time in their lives experienced a form of abuse, one of the criteria for being hired was that the actors should not be currently struggling with feelings about any kind of personal experience like the ones portrayed in the play which might keep them from being involved in the creative process and might make them too self-involved to respond to the audience when performing, during the talk-back sessions, and in dealing with the public before and after the show.

For the first version of the play, the initial research was done by Hurford-Simcoe mostly by contacting experts in the area of family violence at various agencies and by collecting information directly from them and from others to whom she was referred. But after the play was cast the actors were also drawn into the research process. They spent a month, three nights a week, for two or three hours each night, learning about issues and presumably, given that they were actors, trying to attain an imaginative understanding of the world of victims of abuse. They heard representatives of agencies who were sponsoring the play tell stories about clients; two of the actors met with a woman with a history of abuse; and the actors also toured the RCMP detachment to learn about the legal repercussions of abuse. Police officers made presentations in which they gave information and told stories, and some of these officers specialised in cases involving abuse.

For the second version of the play the group building process was a gradual outgrowth of the shared experience of rehearsing, performing, and being on the road; of finding a shared sense of purpose, namely to teach their audiences about family violence and hopefully to inspire action for change either on an individual or a group level; and of receiving one week of training on the issues of family violence in which they learned about the issues from Hurford-Simcoe, and took time away from rehearsals to absorb what had been learned. Thus, the cast did share an experience together, but one that was not intimately connected to the substance of the play or to the creation of the play itself. Because the actors were given information by their director rather than engaging directly with the material themselves, the sense of ensemble was not deeply connected to their discovery of the material.

This example, together with the example of the *Silent Cries* project, helps to clarify the different nuances in the sense of ensemble that it is possible to attain, first, in a group that is creating a play about its own experiences, second, in a group that engages in extensive (although non-participatory) research of a subject in order to create the play, and third, in a group that does not directly engage in researching the material but is given information by their director. The example of *Silent Cries* shows that the discussion of personal experiences that took place in conjunction with the creation and proposal of new scenes for the play could lead to the actors not only sharing the experience of discovering the material together and creating the play, but also learning about each other and about the nature of their group, thus building a more closely-knit community. If the participants had not known each other when the project began, then the process in which they participated would have been a step toward building a community in which all would be aware of individual stories and experiences and how, through the playbuilding process, these became linked. As it was, the same process led to a group that was already a cohesive community becoming closer. In the case of the first version of Under Broken Wings, the cast's extensive research of family violence meant that the experience that they shared helped bring them closer together as a group but did not necessarily help them to learn as much about each other as individuals as would sharing stories about their own lives. For the second version of Under Broken Wings, the cast was given the information. Because they themselves did not engage in a research process, they did not, to the same extent as the casts of Silent Cries and the first version of Under Broken Wings, share an experience that was directly linked to the subject matter of the play. Instead, their sense of ensemble was built mostly around experiences (also shared by the creators of Silent Cries and the first version of Under Broken Wings) connected with rehearsing and performing.

3. Openness of Play and Event that Reflect Shared Experiences and Openness Through Authentication.

Throughout this chapter, one must bear in mind that the version of Under Broken Wings that I am studying, which is a scripted play written by three writers, was adapted from an earlier script and project developed out of a collective creation and research process. Except for a few scenes, the second version is very different from the first version. I did not see the first version, but from reading the script, I find it to be much darker. It includes many scenes that show the act of abuse itself or that refer to acts of abuse, and these scenes and also others that contain emotional, abstract movement pieces try to show not just the facts of abuse but to evoke the feelings of terror and helplessness that abuse produces. In the second version, the kinds of abuse that we see portrayed are subtler, or the scenes are shown from the point of view of an outsider who only sees the signs of abuse and not the act itself. Even in the monologues in which victims or abusers talk about their lives, there are no explicit statements. When abuse is portrayed or referred to explicitly, it is done with humour. Other than the scenes with the professor and boy scout and the situation-comedy family, three of the scenes from the first version were kept intact except for minor changes; four were altered, still reflecting the same abusive relationships as in the first version, but toned down and less explicit and less disturbing; and five new scenes were added that were written to illustrate different kinds of abuse.

The darker mood of the first version of the play may result from the fact that it was created as an expression of what the cast had discovered together in their research; whereas most of the scenes in the second version were written or rewritten to illustrate a point, a situation, or a type of abuse. The first version reflects not only the information but also the experience that the cast went through together of researching the play. The actors were, for a month at least, intellectually and probably also imaginatively steeped in the issues and the world of victims of abuse. Except in one instance, they did not speak to the victims themselves, but to those who had as part of their professions either witnessed cases of abuse or been told about these cases by the victims themselves. This experience seems to have been sufficient to produce a play in which the dominant point of view was that of an insider. The process for the creation of the play was very democratic and thus gave the actors an opportunity to express directly what they had learned.

The different creation processes in the two versions may also account for the change in point of view given to the audience: in the first, that of the omniscient observer (one to whom all is laid open); and in the second, that of the outsider who only sees signs, and sometimes confusing ones. When the play was adapted, except perhaps for the scenes that were kept intact, the dominant point of view shifted to that of an outsider. Brian Marler, who was in the original cast of the play, did the same kind of research that Hurford-Simcoe had done for the first version, this time to make sure their information was up-to-date. Then Marler went through the original script, eliminating or rewriting scenes, and the assistant director Sandra Paddick and Hurford-Simcoe also wrote some new scenes. The idea for revising the play was to clarify its structure, to make sure that the messages of the scenes were clear, to increase the emphasis on certain aspects of family violence, and to leave the audience with a sense of hope. Thus, it seems that, overall, the creation process for the second version of the play was more dispassionate than for the first version. This is not to say that in creating individual scenes the writers were not engaged with their material emotionally. But it seems that the play as a whole was shaped according to certain rational goals rather than to reflect an emotional experience. This approach may account for the loss of the insider's point of view present in the first version.

Overall, the second version has a clearer structure. Its unifying device of a professor and boy scout is similar to a device used in the first version (but in the first version, the device is not so effective because it is not sustained throughout the play). For the second version, it is also clear that the logic of the play's structure depends on an attempt to show the audience many different kinds of abuse and how anyone is a potential abuser or victim. At the same time, although the overall structure of the play is clearer, because the audience is given the point of view of an outsider, many of the scenes are enigmatic. In other words, one often must guess just what the abusive situation has been or is and how one should respond to it. For example, in one scene a young woman stands in front of her grandmother's grave telling her how sorry she is that she did not visit her after she started university. She has one line that seems to indicate that her father has been taking the grandmother's income and another which seems to indicate he did something worse, but one must guess. As a result, one has a confused emotional response. And because one is shown the aftermath of the abusive situation rather than the situation itself, one feels like an outside observer being given only a glimpse of what occurred.

The play in its new version cannot be called the product of a shared expression in the sense of expressing aspects of experience that are shared by the group that created it or by a community with which the creators identify closely; but it has evolved from a play that was at least close in spirit to such an expression. In other words, through its research process the original cast may have been close enough to the issues that they were portraying to find aspects of experience that are shared by those involved in abusive relationships. The second version of the play is not, overall, a reflection of shared experiences; however, it retains some of the elements from the original play.

For example, in a scene in the original play, a boyfriend harasses a teenage girl while she is visiting two friends. From the boyfriend's aggressive behaviour, it is clear that he is physically abusive to her. In the scene in the second version, the boyfriend visits the teenage girl at home to try to get her back after having broken up with her. Here his abusive behaviour is only hinted at. She says, "I kept quiet, I never told anyone about what you did to me." In the scene as written in the original play, the experience that the scene tries to represent seems clear. We sense the fear created by the boyfriend's arrival and the embarrassment of the two friends as her boyfriend bullies both them and her. In the second scene, both as it is written and as it was played, it is more difficult to tell how the situation feels to the characters. Everything is understated and ambiguous. However, it is possible that spectators who have had first-hand experiences with abuse would find the understatement evocative. They might read into the scene details and feelings based on their own experiences.

Since the play was intended for a general audience rather than one age group or community, one cannot say that in general some aspect of the play opens it up to its audiences. For example, when the Naysayers rap, which is really a watered-down version of rap music, was performed at the Bruderheim school, it felt like this was their music. In the Holy Trinity audience, however, there were some African-Canadians who seemed to think it was ridiculous. The music in the play is original, and most of it sounded like seventies-style pop music. The style of the music appealed to some audiences or audience members but not others. Hurford-Simcoe says that they receive many requests for recordings of their music, and in response they have put together a show that consists of the music from all of their plays.[1] One aspect of popular culture that is used throughout the play is a take-off on a 1950's-style television situation comedy, "Keeping Up With the Joneses". This series of scenes reflects an aspect of popular culture with which probably most of their audiences could identify. One scene that seemed to connect particularly well with the Holy Trinity audience was the scene in which two construction workers, one Italian-Canadian and one Franco-Canadian, lament the independence of women and affirm the use of violence to keep men dominant over women and children. The scene has a lot of humour built into it, some which has to do with similarities in the cultural backgrounds of the two men, such as Roman Catholicism. This scene worked well with this Roman Catholic school audience as evidenced by a lot of laughter. Similarly, there is one serious scene which depicts two Native children who are very frightened and who are being driven away from a violent home by their mother.

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[1] Interview, 18 August 1993.

In conclusion, there seems to be a connection between a creative process that reflects the creators' emotional engagement with the material and a play that presents the material from an insider's point of view. The collective creation process for the original version of the play seems to have encouraged an expression of the actors' emotional engagement with the material while the more dispassionate process for the second version did not.

My observations of these performances with respect to the openness of Social-Action Theatre to its audiences are inconclusive because it is not clear whether the second version of Under Broken Wings is open to its audiences. During all of the talk-back sessions, the spectators brought up their own experiences; but they did not reveal that they were drawing a connection between the scenes of the play or what the characters had done and felt and their own experiences.

4. Spectators' Exploration of Issues and Awareness of Community.

The talk-back session after the Bruderheim performance seemed to indicate the play's potential to serve as a catalyst for the community to explore its own connection to the issues of family violence. During the session several of the students asked questions about aspects of the play or their own lives that bothered or puzzled them; a few asked for explanations of scenes that they did not understand; and others asked questions about issues that were raised by the play. Although these questions indicated a potential for a shared exploration of the issues in which the child spectators could play an equal part with the panel members and players, the talk-back session was shaped so that it became an opportunity for giving guidance to the students. The students raised questions that did not necessarily have simple answers, but were given answers that tended to close off the possibility for further discussion. For example, one child asked what you can do if a friend discloses to you that he or she is being abused. To whom do you talk? Should you tell someone about it even if the friend tells you to keep it a secret? The panel responded that you should definitely tell an adult if a friend discloses that he or she is being abused because if the friend tells you, then he or she is probably asking for help. On the one hand, the child spectator who asked the question could be assumed to be seeking guidance, and, thus, a definite answer such as the one provided was sufficient. On the other hand, from the child's point of view, it was probably not a simple matter to decide to betray a friend's confidence; and thus the question could have served as the foundation for a genuine shared exploration of the issue. Another spectator asked what to do if a friend's parents yell at the friend in front of you. This question led to discussion of the difference between discipline and abuse and to Hurford-Simcoe attempting to clarify this difference. However, the child's implicit concern about the parent's act of yelling at the friend when others were present was not addressed and possibly could have been with some discussion amongst both the adults and students. Another asked what to do if you are at a friend's house and the father comes home drunk and violent. The response from the panel was that the child should take care of himself or herself by calling home and arranging for a ride. The child, on the other hand, may have been concerned not just for his or her own safety but for the friend's. Discussion was not limited to the talk-back session itself because all of the junior high students discussed the play afterwards in their health classes, and possibly this additional discussion gave them the opportunity to explore the issues.

In addition, even before the FCSS director and Al Spady booked the play, they envisioned having a few of the students go on a retreat and, with the people from Azimuth acting as facilitators, develop their own play on the same issues. The retreat was organised by the FCSS director, and twelve or fifteen students participated, all of whom had seen the play. Since then the FCSS director who was there at the time of the retreat has resigned, but the new director plans to organise a performance of the play for the grade eight and nine students. Ideally, when this performance happens, it may lead to further exploration of the issues in the same community if not with the same students.

The performance in Bruderheim was held in the school gym. In general, there was a feeling of community within the room and a feeling of being on the junior high students' turf. Thus, the performers were probably alert to the uniqueness of the community.[5]

For the Salisbury Composite High School performance in Sherwood Park, because of the amount of discussion generated by the play, there seemed to be the potential for the play to serve as a catalyst for the community to explore their concerns with family violence. However, rather than drawing connections between the play and the experience of family violence in the community, the spectators asked questions about other kinds of violence and abuse that children encounter, for example, at school. There was discussion about how the term "abuse" can encompass the way that school children treat each other. There was also discussion about communication in the family, especially with adolescents. Once again, the discussion was not limited to the talk-back session because Steve Carter, the counselor from Clover Bar, had a follow-up discussion with the peer counselors in which some of the students said that before seeing the play they had not realised that some of the problems depicted existed. Some said that what they had seen might help them understand people at school whose behaviour they considered weird; or that in light of what they had learned they needed to respond in a different way to something a friend had told them.

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[5] See description on page 163.

Although the theatre in which the play was performed was at the high school where some of the peer counselors would be attending after they graduated from junior high, there was not a particularly strong connection between those in the audience and the room. Furthermore, not everyone in the room knew each other nor were they all from the same organisations; their main connection with each other was just that they all probably lived in Sherwood Park. Thus, there was not a strong feeling of community in the room. On the other hand, there was a feeling of community amongst the twenty peer counselors sitting together at the front of the theatre, and the actors would have been aware of them as a unique group. Perhaps even more importantly, the other spectators seemed to be aware of the peer counseling group as a unique community. During the discussion, there were questions addressed to them spontaneously from the audience, and they and Carter were brought into the discussion by the audience and the panel members almost as if they were on the panel.

Bob Marvin of CFS thinks that the audience for the performance at the Bracco school consisted of professionals and some junior high school students with their families. There were no real connections among the spectators as a group, and they may not have all been from the Northeast Edmonton area. Consequently, there was no basis for a feeling of community except for the fact that they had all demonstrated at least an interest in family violence issues by coming to the play and were all presumably from Edmonton. Thus, although there were questions during the talk-back session, there was no real potential here for a community to explore its issues and concerns unless the spectators had agreed in advance to be part of an ongoing project.

According to Marvin, the audience at M. E. LaZerte probably consisted of local Northeast Edmonton residents who may have had first-hand experiences with abuse. In this audience there did seem to be a sense of community. The spectator's main relationship to the school where the performance was held was that it was in the heart of their neighbourhood. As evidence of the feeling of community during the event, after the performance there were three disclosures made in public during the talk-back session. These disclosures were from three people in the audience who admitted to having been involved in abusive relationships: an emotionally abused teenage boy, a battered wife, and a former batterer. The teenage boy seemed to be still embroiled in the abusive situation. He was crying and wanted to know how he could let his parents know that what they did to him was wrong. The panel responded to him, and especially one panel member spoke to him across the room as if they were alone. She made sure he understood there was help for him. He was with a woman who seemed to be there to support him. In general, the discussion after this performance focussed on the issue of battered women. People brought up concerns about how to address the problem in the community. They wanted to know what the police would do if called.

Thus, during this performance there was an unusually intense exploration of the relevance of the issues presented in the play to the community, and there was the potential and possibly even some momentum built up for the further exploration of these issues, either with the Northeast Edmonton community or with at least some of the members of the audience. It is not clear whether the players recognised the uniqueness of the community during the performance, although those that were involved certainly must have recognised it during the talk-back session.

Even though the performance at Holy Trinity High School was for 800 people, there was a strong sense of community both during and after the performance, and the participation in the talk-back session seemed to indicate the play's potential to serve as a catalyst for a shared exploration of the issues. Perhaps of the five performances, this was the one where there was the most sense of community because not only did everyone there go to the same high school but they had in common a religion which was practised in school, Roman Catholicism. The players were probably very aware of the uniqueness of the audience's community because of the activities that took place before and after the performance in conjunction with the conference at the school. During the discussion, there was a definite sense of the show being on their turf. Some of the council members had prepared questions, and the students cheered each other on when they made a point or challenged something that had been said by a panel member. Nevertheless, there seemed to be little opportunity for the students to exchange stories and opinions amongst each other. The large size of the audience and possibly the presence of the television cameras may have inhibited these kinds of exchanges. After the play and talk-back session, the students went back to their classes where there were forty-minute discussions about the play and about the issues raised by the play. These discussions may have given the students some opportunity to explore the issues.

Azimuth's experiences with these performances show that the function of a talk-back session can vary and will not necessarily lead to a community exploring the issues that are presented in the play. For example, the function of the session after the Bruderheim performance seemed to be to give guidance to the students in the audience. After the Sherwood Park performance, spectators used the session to explore their concerns, but they were concerns that were only peripherally related to the subject of the play. The talk-back session after the performance at M.E. LaZerte was used in one case to publicly express anger and hurt with regard to a personal experience and in another case to challenge an authority who was present on the panel.

5. Gathering of the Spectators.

For the Bruderheim performance, all of the grade seven through nine students were required to see the play.

These students take health classes, and in these classes the teachers told them about the play and what to expect. Both before the play and at the beginning of the talk-back session, Hurford-Simcoe spoke to the students in the audience much as a teacher would in order to guide them through the experience of seeing a play and participating in such a discussion. The adult community members who were at the performance had no introduction to the play except possibly for the posters that were put up around town.

The general audience for the performance in Sherwood Park at Salisbury Composite High School had no introduction to what they would be seeing other than seeing a poster. The five men who came from the Kinsmen Club probably understood the nature of the event, either from seeing the presentation that Hurford-Simcoe had done for the club before they booked the play or from hearsay. Before going to the performance the peer counselors at Clover Bar had been learning about family violence issues, and they understood that they had been invited by Steve Carter, the school counselor and leader of the peer support program, to see the play in order to reinforce and supplement what they had learned. Beforehand, Carter told the peer counseling group about Azimuth and the kind of theatre they do. He also told them what the play was about, that they might find it disturbing, and for that reason that they would meet after the play to talk about it. In addition, he told them they should look out for each other. Because there were four or five students who were going that he knew had first-hand experiences with family violence, he talked to them separately, had them sit next to someone who could keep a watch on them, and he himself kept an eye on them.

It is difficult to tell how much preparation the spectators who went to the performances at M.E. LaZerte and the Bracco School had been given. The people in the audiences for both performances had links with schools and organisations that received a mailing from CFS, which consisted of a cover letter that described the play, a review of the original version of the play done in Sherwood Park, and a poster that CFS requested be put up. The staff and volunteers for the centre personally delivered posters to the schools to try to make a personal contact with the school administrations.

At Holy Trinity High School, all of the students were required to see the play. They knew little about it except that it was a play about family violence. However, the play, which was on a Friday, was scheduled as the main event of their school conference on family violence, which had been taking place all that week. Other than the play, the only other activity connected with the conference were the "morning reflections" that the students heard on the subject of family violence over the public-address system every day. The student government leaders prepared questions in advance for the talk-back session, and the president of the student government introduced the play and moderated the talk-back session. There was also a prayer said before the play for victims of abuse. Thus, the way the play was framed, the fact that it was the main event of the week-long conference, that it was introduced by a prayer, that the school president introduced the play and moderated the talk-back session, and that the student government leaders had prepared questions in advance meant that the student government and the administration of the school, in a sense, made the event their own. The students' behaviour during the talk-back session seems to indicate that the sense of ownership was extended to some of the student body as well.

My observations of these performances seem to confirm that the gathering of the spectators for a performance can prepare them for the particular nature of the event and give them a personal involvement with the event, thus affecting their response to the event. For the Bruderheim performance, at least for the junior high school students, as a result of the introductions they were given to the play in their health classes, these students probably understood that they were not going to the play just to be entertained but to learn about family violence and to grapple with what they saw. The students seemed engaged during the performance, both during the humourous scenes, as evidenced by a lot of laughter, and the serious scenes when there was a character with whom they might identify. For example, during the second serious scene of the play in which a thirteen year-old who is being abused by her uncle is comforted by her brother, the audience was very quiet and attentive. Some were obviously moved. There was the same feeling of quiet attention for the scene where a young woman is talking to her grandmother who is dead and telling her she is sorry she did not take better care of her when she was alive. In both these scenes there is the potential for the young audience members to identify closely with the main character. The audience became more restless toward the end of the play when there was a whole series of serious scenes dealing with more exclusively adult problems.

Similarly, for the performances at Salisbury Composite and Holy Trinity, at least some of the spectators were prepared for the event, and in both cases the spectators were attentive throughout. On the other hand, for the performances at the Bracco School and at M.E. LaZerte, it is unclear whether the spectators had been prepared for the play, and at both performances there were people that left during the play. Their leaving could have been attributable to many factors, including the distractions at the Bracco School and perhaps their finding that the play did not address their concerns, but given that the play did hold the attention of audiences that had been prepared for the event, it could also possibly be attributed to the spectators not being properly prepared for the play and perhaps expecting to be passively entertained rather than having to grapple with what they were shown. People left during the performance at M.E. LaZerte at three separate moments during a section of the play that is mostly serious: they left after the scene with the granddaughter and after the scene that follows it with a wife and an emotionally abusive husband, and during the last serious scene of the play.

Given that many of the spectators at the performance at Salisbury Composite High School had been prepared for the performance only by seeing a poster, one might conclude that even when a substantial part of an audience is gathered in such a way that they are prepared for the particular nature of the event, as were the peer counselors, it can affect the attentiveness of the entire audience. In this case, the fact that Carter had suggested to the peer counselors that the play tied in directly with what they had been learning about family violence, and the fact that they occupied a prominent place in the auditorium, may have meant that their behaviour influenced the other spectators.

In addition, the performances at the Bruderheim School and at Holy Trinity High School seem to suggest that the framing of a performance can either reinforce or undermine the sense of hierarchy between players and spectators. Thus, at Bruderheim, where the students were required to see the play, it was tied in to the curricula for their health classes, and when Hurford-Simcoe spoke to them as a teacher would, giving them instructions about what was expected of them, the framing of the performance seemed to cement the hierarchical relationship. In contrast, at Holy Trinity, although the students were also required to see the play, the fact that the administration and student government made the play their own had a levelling effect on the relationship between the players and the spectators. In effect, the community took more control of the event.

6. Encouraging Participation.

During the five performances I observed, whenever possible Azimuth arranged the space into a quasi-thrust stage. That way the performers could make some of their entrances and exits through the aisles in the audience, giving the spectators more of a sense of participation. The closing song, "Make Change", symbolically invited the audience to join in the struggle against family violence, and just after the song Hurford-Simcoe explained that the play has been done all over Alberta and so has the potential for having an impact if everyone in the audience does one thing to solve the problem of abuse. One practice which encouraged participation by the community and which happened the spring following the performance in Bruderheim was that several of the students, with the help of the Azimuth staff, created their own play about the same issues.[6]

Finally, the talk-back session always resulted in audience participation. Even when no one in the audience had a question, Hurford-Simcoe would break the ice by asking the audience a question, encouraging them to find their own connections with the scenes in the play. However, the implicit message of asking the audience to consult the panel was that the spectators themselves were in need of outside guidance and expertise and that their own knowledge and experience was insufficient. Nevertheless, during each of the talk-back sessions, there were different relationships established amongst the spectators and between the spectators and the panel, not always resulting in the spectators having lower status. At the Bruderheim performance, the session was shaped as an opportunity for the adults in the audience and on the panel to give guidance to the students and perhaps also to let them know that adults were concerned and available to help them. Consequently, at this performance, the students' participation led to an unequal relationship in which they consulted the adults. At the Sherwood Park performance, there was a different dynamic. The adults in the audience proposed their own ideas, and there were instances of spectators exchanging opinions amongst each other. The peer counselors and Carter were asked questions by a few of the spectators in the audience. At one point a woman in the audience asked how parents could keep their children out of trouble once they reached adolescence; and there were several responses, including one response from another woman in the audience who works with teenagers and who said that she does not understand why people have such a hard time communicating with teenagers, that she finds it easy because they are just like other people. An actor on the panel also responded, saying that parents should start talking to their children when they are young and then they would not have trouble talking to them when they are older. Because of his status as an actor in the play and because he was on the panel, which lent him extra status, the comment seemed slightly overbearing. But overall, the relationship between the spectators and panel members during this talk-back session seemed to allow the spectators to participate as equals.

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[6] For a further description of this activity, see page 181.

At M.E. LaZerte, there were more people who told about their own experiences, including three people who made disclosures. There were some also who told stories about people they knew having been treated poorly by the police when they called for help to get away from an abusive partner. They brought these stories up in order to challenge the police officer on the panel and to demand information about what kind of help victims of family violence could expect. At Holy Trinity, there were also spectators who ventured their own opinions or challenged what had been said by a panel member, but other than cheering, there was little exchange amongst the spectators. Nevertheless, at both performances, the spectators participated as equals with the panel.

The experiences with the talk-back sessions at these performances seem to indicate that the nature of the participation depends on a variety of factors which affect the relative status of the spectators and panel. When the talk-back session is set up in a hierarchical manner, the credentials of the panel members give them status; but the spectators may also gain status depending on their own credentials, age, knowledge of the issues, and experiences. As a result, they may take their share of the control of the discussion. However, when as in the case of the Bruderheim audience the spectators do not have the status to take control, the relationship may remain hierarchical.

7. Agreement Between Players and Spectators.

The second version of Under Broken Wings was not created to meet the needs of any particular group. Rather, it was created for a general teenage and adult audience with the purpose of raising the spectators' awareness of the various forms of abuse and issues associated with it, giving them as many different examples as possible with the hope that those who had experienced abuse would identify with at least one of the scenes, and giving the audience the sense that something could be done but that they would have to take responsibility. In 1992 Azimuth conducted a needs assessment in which they sent out questionnaires to a random sampling of their contacts and correspondents. Those who received the questionnaire were asked to rate a list of issues in order of importance. The result of the survey was that the number-one issue of concern to their potential audience was family violence. For this reason, Azimuth decided to revive Under Broken Wings. Hurford-Simcoe comments that they had also had many requests for the show, and she speculates that the show has wide appeal because it is a collage of many different styles and stories, which means that there is something in it to appeal to or touch everyone.[7]

In the case of the Bruderheim School, Al Spady and the FCSS director knew of particular cases of family violence in their community and envisioned an event that would allow them to initiate and sustain a dialogue with the teenagers in their community about family violence. Spady was aware that at least four or five students in each classroom of about twenty-five to thirty in his school were having personal experiences with family violence, and the youth workers at the local youth centre were also aware of specific cases. Spady and the FCSS director wanted not only to bring in the play but also to have the people at Azimuth facilitate the creation of a play on the same issues by the teens in the community. When some grant money became available, he and the FCSS director applied for $1500 to sponsor Azimuth's play and $1000 to run their own retreat the following spring, a retreat for which Azimuth would be invited to facilitate the creation of the students' own play about the same issues.

Bob Williams of the Kinsmen Club said that sponsoring the play was a way of testing the waters in the community to see how much of a need there was to discuss these issues and what kind of a response there would be. It was also a way of bringing up what is perhaps considered a sensitive issue. The play was booked after Hurford-Simcoe made a presentation to the club about the play. Despite the fact that the play did seem to reveal a concern with these issues in the community, there were few Kinsmen who attended the play, and they voted that in the future their participation in the Shining Light Child Abuse Prevention program would be limited to making a monetary contribution. Williams explained that there were already a few services related to family violence available in the community, such as counseling and a women's shelter, and the Kinsmen felt that any further effort by their club was not needed.

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[7] Interview, 18 August 1993.

Steve Carter has had a long professional association with Hurford-Simcoe both while she was at the RCMP and since Azimuth was founded. He explained that she often contacts the peer support programs in the schools to invite them to see the plays and said that some of the original cast members in Azimuth's plays were from one of his peer support groups. He was familiar with the play and thought that it did a good job of transferring the feelings of victims of abuse to the audience, and for this reason decided to take those in the peer counseling program that wanted to go to the performance at Salisbury Composite High School so that they might understand abuse

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[1] Interview, 17 November 1993.

better from the victim's standpoint. He thought that it would serve as a good way to summarise and reinforce what the counselors had learned in their training and that it would serve as a way to stimulate discussion about those issues. The discussion he had with the students after the play seems to confirm that the play served his purposes well.[9]

Bob Marvin, the social worker at Edmonton Community and Family Services, explained that CFS brought in the play for the Northeast Edmonton Community at the two high schools after they had received promotional material from Azimuth. He said that ideally these kinds of popular theatre projects should give those who are directly involved with the issues a chance to express their own experiences rather than having social workers or professional actors express their experiences for them. He explained that his clients' involvement in a play provides a natural opportunity to continue working on the issue and problems even after the performance is over; in contrast, the Under Broken Wings project provided little opportunity for follow-up activity. As part of CFS, he can work with people's individual problems and concerns and even work with them in groups, but he is not free to be an organiser in the community.

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[9] Interview, 24 November 1993.

For Holy Trinity High School, the impetus for bringing the play to the school came from the public health nurse assigned to the school. She applied for funding for the play through the Edmonton Board of Health but did not get it. The principal of the school, Mr. Grattan, was interested in the project because he was concerned about statistics on the occurrence of family violence; in addition, there had been talk in the school the previous year that some students had experienced violence in their dating relationships. Consequently, a committee of three, including Mr. Grattan and two teachers, Hilda McClellan and Patti Clancy-Novosel, raised funds for the play, and the play was planned as the main event of a school conference on family violence.

After the conference was over, the school had the students fill out evaluations, and at least 134 students out of the 800 who saw the play filled these out. Most rated the play and the conference as successful. The evaluation form also gave the opportunity for the students to give written comments, and the school compiled any comments that departed from the usual "very good" or "very bad". Most of these comments indicate that the students learned from the play and thought it was very relevant and worthwhile, but there were also many comments indicating that the students knew of particular cases of abuse, either their own or a friend's, and felt frustrated that the play and conference had not helped them with these concerns. Here are some of the comments as compiled and edited by the school:

> We need a better definition between discipline and abuse.
>
> One thing I felt wasn't expressed enough was what we can do to help friends or how difficult it can be to get people out of abusive homes.
>
> I wish that emotional abuse by teachers to students should be stopped. It can and will ruin student morale and cause them to feel stupid and feel like garbage. Teachers are supposed to make the students feel successful not unsuccessful.
>
> Very good. But what happened to abuse in the work force and in the schools amongst teachers and students and what about on our streets. It's everywhere. Not just at home.
>
> didn't . . . focus on what to do when you are involved in an [abusive] situation. Actors should have provided more info on that topic.
>
> deal more with learning how to convince people to go for help when they don't see the point in living at all.
>
> too much time was focussed on sexual abuse during discussion . . . in our school . . . I feel that physical abuse is . . . a greater threat.

These comments indicate a desire to explore these issues with and in the context of the school community.

The experiences with these performances seem to confirm that contact between the players and a leader from the community can help ensure that the play will fulfill the community's purposes for bringing in the play. Spady and the FCSS Director in Bruderheim envisioned having a retreat after the performance and by contacting Hurford-Simcoe arranged for Azimuth to help facilitate the retreat. Similarly, Steve Carter's previous contacts with Azimuth and his familiarity with the play allowed him to envision a specific purpose for the play that it was able to fulfill. Perhaps a meeting between Azimuth and Bob Marvin at CFS could have also led to the play being used for specific purposes in the community that would meet some of its needs.

When compared to the experiences with the Bruderheim School and the Clover Bar peer-counseling group, Azimuth's experience with the Sherwood Park Kinsmen Club suggests that a community is more likely to shape an event to meet its needs and purposes when it has taken an active part in its previous contacts with the theatre group. The Kinsmen Club were on the receiving end of a presentation about the play, and then seemed to use the play only in a passive way, as a way of bringing up a sensitive issue. When there was an active response to the play in the audience, the Kinsmen still voted not to become actively involved in the issues in their community other than by making a donation to their own club's awareness program. Their response suggests that the event was not shaped to meet the club's needs nor did it fulfill these needs.

The experience with Holy Trinity High School seems to show that even when the leaders of a community have specific purposes for a theatre event and shape it accordingly, the members of the community still might feel that their needs have not been met. The written comments on the evaluations reveal that some of the students were frustrated with the play and discussions because they had personal issues that they wanted to address in the context of the school community and had no opportunity to do so. The experience with Holy Trinity suggests that to be most effective the previous contacts between the theatre group and the community might have to be with the community members themselves rather than with their representatives or leaders.

Conclusions

From my study and observation of the Under Broken Wings project, I have drawn the following conclusions:

1. The spectators' and players' ages, knowledge, experiences, and credentials affect their relative status and help determine whether their relationship is hierarchical or egalitarian. Even when a talk-back session is set up in a hierarchical manner, the factors

that give the spectators status may still lead them to take their share of the control of the discussion.

2. Even when a substantial part of an audience is gathered in such a way that they are prepared for the particular nature of the event, as were the peer counselors at the Sherwood Park performance, their presence can affect the attentiveness of the entire audience. In this case, the fact that Carter had suggested to the peer counselors that the play tied in directly with what they had been learning about family violence, and the fact that they occupied a prominent place in the auditorium, may have meant that their behaviour influenced the other spectators.

3. The gathering and also the framing of a theatre event can either reinforce or undermine the sense of hierarchy between players and spectators. Thus, at Bruderheim, where the students were required to see the play, where the play was tied in to the curricula for their health classes, and where Hurford-Simcoe spoke to them as a teacher would, giving them instructions about what was expected of them, the framing of the performance seemed to cement the hierarchical relationship. In contrast, at Holy Trinity, although the students were also required to see the play, the fact that the administration and student government made the play their own had a levelling effect on the relationship between the players

and the spectators. In effect, the community took more control of the event.

4. There seems to be a connection between a creative process that reflects the creators' emotional engagement with the material and a play that presents the material from an insider's point of view. The collective creation process for the original version of Under Broken Wings seems to have encouraged an expression of the actors' emotional engagement with the material while the more dispassionate process for the second version did not.

5. The sense of ensemble that it is possible to attain, first, in a group that creates a play about its own experiences, second, in a group that engages in extensive (although non-participatory) research of a subject in order to create the play, and third, in a group that does not directly engage in researching the material but is given information by their director, may have different nuances. In the first case, the process may result in building a more closely-knit community in which the players get to know each other as individuals. The second case may result in the group becoming closer but not necessarily learning as much about each other as individuals as would result from sharing stories about their own lives. In the third case, the group may not, to the same extent as in the other two cases, share an experience that is directly linked to the subject matter

of the play. Instead, this group's sense of ensemble may be built mostly on experiences connected with rehearsing and performing.

6. The function of a talk-back session can vary and will not necessarily lead to a community exploring the issues that are presented in the play.

7. A community is more likely to shape an event to meet its needs and purposes when it has taken an active part in its previous contacts with the theatre group.

8. Even when the leaders of a community have specific purposes for a theatre event and shape it accordingly, the members of the community still might feel that their needs have not been met. Therefore, to be most effective the previous contacts between the theatre group and the community might have to be with the community members themselves rather than only with their representatives or leaders.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

My initial description of Social-Action Theatre was "theatre created with, and sometimes by, the members of a community to express a shared point of view about some aspect of their own experience that they want to explore for the purpose of determining how to effect change." The examination of the projects described in Chapters Two and Three suggests another aspect central to Social-Action Theatre: the group-building and ensemble-building process is directly linked to an exploration of the subject matter of the play. When the players have engaged in a process of exploring the issues in the creation of the play, then the performance can point to the players as people, to the process they have been through, and to the discoveries that they have made. In addition, the theatre is not only created with or by a community, but is also brought to a community. This last point relates to the fact that the community with which the play is created is not always the same as that to which it is brought, although the two may be part of a broadly-defined community that shares the same interest with regard to an issue.

Consequently, the facilitator of the project or the players themselves may be prompted to pose and answer such questions as: (1) What kind of a community do we wish to serve with this theatre project? (2) What groups are included in the community? (3) At what level will the community participate in the creation of the play? (4) Have the members of the community who will be present at the performance already developed a sense of trust and safety? In addition they may ask: (5) What does the company stand for? (6) What are its values? (7) Does the company subscribe to a "dogmatic" ideology? and (8) How do its values correspond to, or differ from, those of the community, and are they compatible without compromising either the company's or the community's integrity?

To a large extent, the answers to the first three questions and the relevance of the last four will depend on whether the play refers to a very particular world and set of circumstances that might limit what kinds of communities will be able to recognize the world and situations the play portrays. Similarly, the relevance of the last four questions may depend to a large extent on how much of the company's explicitly acknowledged or implicit ideological commitments are reflected in the play.

When the community that the play is created with and for shares a group culture, then the play can be an expression of the community. But when the community that the theatre is created with and for is broadly defined, then the main link between the play and the community may be that the individual audience members share first-hand experiences with the issues being addressed in the play. My observations in Chapters Two and Three suggest that when the spectators have first-hand experiences similar to those portrayed in the play, these experiences give them the insider's expertise that helps to create an egalitarian relationship between players and spectators in which players and spectators are aware of either their shared backgrounds or their shared concerns and thus are more alert to each other as people. As the example of the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre performance of Silent Cries shows, they also may be more curious about their differences. This relationship and the spectators' status encourages them to participate on an equal basis. Furthermore, if the play uses elements of realism, the spectators' first-hand experiences can help ensure that the realism (and, perhaps by implication, other techniques and styles designed to draw the spectator into the world of the play) will reduce the sense of separation between players and spectators rather than creating a dynamic in which the spectators feel like observers of an unfamiliar world. Finally, when the spectators share first-hand experiences similar to those portrayed in the play and when the players and spectators are from the same broadly-defined community, their alertness to each other as people and their awareness of their shared interests and backgrounds may create the potential for the community represented by the audience and the community represented by the players to build bonds that may outlast the performance and event.

The spectators' first-hand experiences with the issues depicted in the play and other factors, such as the spectators' and players' relative ages, knowledge of the issues, and credentials, affect the degree of equality in the relationship between players and audience. The dynamic of a Social-Action Theatre event is, in part, determined by these and other factors that are linked to the relative status of the spectators and players; and, for that reason, the dynamic can manifest itself in different ways depending on these factors. For example, at the Bruderheim performance of Under Broken Wings the dynamic was like a lesson; and at the Global Visions Festival performance of Silent Cries, the dynamic fostered a relationship in which the players were put in the position of being studied. Neither dynamic is conducive to stimulating a shared exploration of the issues in which the players and spectators play an equal part.

When the spectators have had first-hand experiences with the issues depicted in the play, they may feel that the play is, in a sense, open to the addition of their own experiences and points of view. This openness, however, depends on whether the play has been created from an insider's point of view and, thus, on whether the play reflects shared experiences, reflects the players' feeling of identification with the community, contains documentary evidence that is open to the spectators' interpretation, or incorporates aspects of the community's culture that are shared. Some questions a facilitator may be prompted to ask include: (1) Are the players given an opportunity, through engaging in participatory or other kinds of research, to identify with the community? (2) Is the creative process shaped to reflect the creators' emotional engagement with the issues? (3) Does the play draw from the targeted community's history and contemporary problems? (4) Does it incorporate local slang, dialects, symbols, cultural forms, folklore, popular art forms, and forms from modern popular culture? (5) Have the players engaged in a research process that has uncovered contemporary documentary sources that can somehow be incorporated into the play?

Other questions are related to the use of space, the conventions of performance (when "performance" includes not just the play itself but how the audience is brought in to the event and what happens after the event), the "framing" of the performance or the context of the event, and the psychological and sociological relationships between the players and audience and between everyone involved and the performance space:

(1) Does the gathering of the audience help focus

attention on the particular nature of the event and give the audience a personal involvement with the event? (2) What is the effect of the framing of the performance or the context in which it occurs, and can it be adjusted or manipulated? My observations from the two projects show that the gathering of the audience and the framing of the event are two separate concepts but can sometimes be traced to the same source, as when a particular person known to the spectators invites the spectators, tells them about the event, or even leads or takes them to the event. In these cases (such as Steve Carter organising the peer counselors to see Under Broken Wings in Sherwood Park or Jackie Fiala handpicking those who would see Silent Cries at the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre) the nature of the relationship between the leader and the spectators, the spectators' associations with the leader, and how and what the leader communicates to the spectators about the event, help to determine whether the spectators understand the particular nature of the event, help to give them a personal relationship to the event, and may also help determine whether they will take an active or more passive role during and after the performance. In other cases the gathering and framing of the event can be traced to mostly distinct sources, as when participation in the event is required and the spectators are given varying degrees of information about the event but the spectators take a more active or passive stance to the event depending on the context of the event. For example, at both the Bruderheim and Holy Trinity High School performances the gathering of the spectators consisted of the students being required to see the play and being given varying amounts of information about the particular nature of the event. The context of the event[1] seemed in these cases either to reinforce or to undermine the sense of hierarchy between players and performers and thus to help determine whether the spectators took a more active or more passive role.

If the theatre company and/or the community keeps these kinds of influences in mind, they may be able to reinforce them or to counter them for the purposes of creating a dynamic in which the spectators feel a personal connection with the event and become actively involved with the event. In a case where the context of the event encourages the spectators to be active but where the method of bringing them into the event is impersonal, the company may want to reinforce the spectators' feeling of having a personal connection with the event by, for example, limiting the size of the audience and chatting informally with the spectators before the play begins to find out what their concerns and experiences are both as individuals and a community. In a case where the gathering of the spectators has helped to give them a personal connection with the event but where the context of the event reinforces the hierarchical relationship between spectators and players and thus makes them more passive, the company may want to stress as much as possible the value of the spectators' experiences and points of view, both through explicit statements and through implicit messages in the conventions of performance and the shaping of the talk-back session or other aspects of the event that involve participation.

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[1] At Bruderheim the context of the event was that the spectators were required to see the play, that the play was tied into the curricula for their health classes, and the way Hurford-Simcoe spoke to them before the play; and at Holy Trinity the context was that the play was part of a week-long conference which was partly student run and which focussed on the same issue that was addressed in the play.

The conventions of performance, including gathering and dispersal, the use and choice of space, the audience's relationship (psychological and sociological) to the performance space and to the players, and the extra contacts between the theatre company and the community, can all contribute toward reducing the sense of hierarchy and separation between players and spectators, toward encouraging participation, and toward encouraging an atmosphere of informality and directness. Thus the facilitators and/or company members may be prompted to pose and answer these questions: (1) How will the space be used and what kind of space will be used? (2) What are the conventions of performance, including the gathering and dispersal of the audience? (3) Are the use of space and conventions of performance non-illusionistic? (4) Do they reduce as much as possible the sense of separation between players and spectators and encourage participation? (5) What is the audience's and players' relationship (psychological and sociological) to the space? (6) What is the audience's relationship to the players (psychological and sociological)? (7) How can participatory research and other contacts with the community be used to enhance the relationship between the players and the audience by making the relationship one in which players and audience are aware of each other as people rather than just as people in their roles as players and spectators; by making the relationship more egalitarian; and by encouraging active participation?

When asking these questions about each performance, the company will inevitably find that some factors are fixed and cannot, practically, be altered; however, other factors may be able to be manipulated to help compensate for any fixed factors that take away from the desired effect. For example, the company may find that it must perform in a very large space for a very large audience even though the play is scaled to a much smaller audience and to a more intimate space. The company might then consider ways of decreasing the sense of separation between players and audience, perhaps by incorporating audience participation into the play itself and by having the actors mingle with the audience before and after the performance. The company might also facilitate workshops with the community before the performance itself to help create bonds between the company and the community. Or, if the spectators' psychological and sociological relationship to the space reinforces their having low status, the company may want to adjust the conventions of performance to try to encourage a different relationship to the space in which the spectators can imagine their status to be higher.[1] One example might be when performing for a school audience or a jail audience to have a few quiet scenes taking place simultaneously and to have the audience move around and choose which scene they want to watch at which time. The gathering and dispersal of the audience could also be used to radically change the atmosphere in the room. For example, for the Bruderheim performance of Under Broken Wings the pop-style music that was performed before the beginning of the play while the students were filing in helped transform the atmosphere of the school gym from institutional to a warmer, more casual atmosphere.

The conclusions I have drawn in Chapters One, Two, and Three indicate that if the goal of a project is to stimulate a shared exploration of the issues, a facilitator of a Social-Action Theatre project would find it useful to ask these additional questions:

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[1] If they imagine it to be higher, perhaps it will in fact be higher in the context of the performance.

(1) How do the facilitators, the leaders from the community, and/or the community members envision that change will happen? To what extent have the issues been addressed within the community in the past? What steps might be required and over how long a period of time? (2) Will the purpose of the participation or the talk-back session be to begin a tentative exploration of the issues or to identify particular goals for working toward change? (3) What kind of follow-up activity will there be after the play to ensure that the shared exploration of the issues continues, and who will take charge of this follow-up activity? (4) Are there different interest groups within the community that will have predictably different points of view on the issues?

My observations from the readings and the two projects show that the answers to these questions will vary enormously from audience to audience. On the one hand, when a Social-Action Theatre company brings a play to a community, the community can enjoy the play or even learn from it or find some other benefit in it as a product without having to ask the above questions or without having to become active participants in the relationship with the theatre company. However, consideration of these questions seems to be an essential step when the community intends to build on the process that has begun during the performance. My observations from both the readings and the two projects seem to show that the community is more likely to ask these questions and to take an active part in shaping the event when the theatre company somehow engages with the community before the performance and when the community takes an active role in its relationship with the theatre company. Consequently, the facilitators of a project or the players themselves may be prompted to pose and answer other questions: (1) Will participatory research and other contacts with the community be used; and, if so, how can they be used to ensure that the play and event meet the needs of the community and are relevant to its concerns? (2) Are the contacts with community leaders or with community members? Depending on the particular relationship of the leaders to the community, contacting the leaders alone may or may not serve the interests of the community with regard to the Social-Action Theatre project. Whether or not the community's interests are served depends in part on whether the leaders' primary commitment is to an institution or to the interests of the community members or, put another way, whether the leaders' interests differ from those of the community members.

Overall, my study shows that Social-Action Theatre is a unique kind of theatre that depends for its effectiveness on the spectators having first-hand experiences related to the issues explored by the theatre company and reflected in the play itself. Therefore, the processes set in motion by this link between spectators and players through the play and event and through contacts outside of the event, rather than the isolated experience of the performance, are of primary importance for Social-Action Theatre. Because the process assumes so much importance, practitioners may be sensitive to various and shifting factors which can radically change the processes set in motion by different performances of any one play or by different plays on the same issue. The interconnectedness of the various factors suggests that it is important for Social-Action Theatre practitioners to be aware of all the factors in operation and to be able, where practical, to manipulate them. In addition, the practitioners may have to be aware of relationships and factors normally not considered central to creating an effective theatrical event. These relationships and factors are important for Social-Action Theatre, the goal of which is to set in motion a process in which, at a minimum, the spectators will begin to explore the issues addressed in the play and, ultimately, in which bonds will be created between the communities represented by the players and the spectators for the purpose of continuing to explore the issues and, eventually, of identifying specific steps for working together toward change.

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